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UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDES TOWARD AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: THE ROLE OF
POLICY FRAMING, MERITOCRACY BELIEFS, AND GROUP IMAGE GUILT

ANJALI BHATT
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Kisha S. Jones
Assistant Professor of Psychology
Thesis Supervisor

Kenneth N. Levy
Associate Professor of Psychology
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

ABSTRACT

Attitudes toward Affirmative Action Programs (AAP) can be affected by the perceiver's characteristics as well as the program framing. Self-enhancement theory has been shown to provide a framework for understanding why non-beneficiaries of AAPs react to the program in a certain manner, supporting the idea that the participant's positive self-images were negated as a result of program framing. This study sought to understand the relationship perceiver's belief in meritocracy (i.e., the principle that achievements should be earned), endorsement of group-image guilt (i.e., negativity based off of an association with an advantaged racial group), and policy framing in explaining self-images and attitudes toward AAPs. It was hypothesized that policy framing would interact with both belief in meritocracy and group-image guilt to predict self-images and attitudes toward AAPs. These hypotheses were not supported as no significant interactions were found. However, there was a significant main effect of belief in meritocracy on performance self-images and of group-image guilt on self-images (performance and social) and attitudes toward AAPs. Practical implications and future directions for research are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In 2010, the US Census reported that while Asian, Black and Hispanic/Latino minorities made up more than 30% of the total American workforce, they were grossly underrepresented in management and business jobs, holding only 20% of those positions (American Fact Finder, 2013). Furthermore, Whites make up approximately 84% of Americans making \$125,000 or more, while those who are Asian, Black and Hispanic/Latino constitute only 15.9% combined (American Fact Finder, 2013).. Affirmative Action Programs (AAP) have attempted to ameliorate these representation inequities but have often been met with harsh criticism, with those identifying as White expressing the strongest opposition to these programs in comparison to other racial groups (Kravitz et al., 2000). Previous studies have focused on perceiver characteristics (e.g., race, political ideology, racism; Harrison, Kravtiz, Mayer, Leslie and Lev-Arey, 2006) and program features (e.g., program prescriptiveness; Harrison et al., 2006) to explain attitudes towards AAPs. Further, in attempting to understand how to improve reactions to AAPs among non-beneficiaries, Hideg and Ferris (2014) demonstrated that the framing of AAPs impacted their attitudes: describing the policies as managing diversity as opposed to addressing past discrimination led to more positive reactions. Recognizing the importance of perceiver characteristics and framing, this study looks to self-enhancement (Sedikides & Strube, 1997) and White identity management (Knowles, Lowery, Chou & Unzueta, 2014) theories to explore the effects of AAP framing on reactions to AAPs among White individuals. In particular,

meritocracy beliefs and group-image guilt are explored as moderators of the relationship between AAP framing and both self-image perceptions and AAP attitudes.

Affirmative Action Programs

Affirmative Action is designed to rectify racial and sexual discrimination in environments such as the workplace and higher education (Crosby & Clayton, 1990). In specific reference to race-based programs, affirmative action attempts to correct the injustices that play out towards racial minorities as a result of the institutional level of racism, which impacts the racial inequalities existing across multiple organizations and affects large numbers of racial/ethnic minorities (Jones, 1997).

Since the advent of AAPs in the United States in 1965, with Executive Order 11246 (Aberson, 1997), there has been backlash from Whites (including men and women), largely because they felt they would be unfairly impacted or lose out on opportunities. Some argue that a diverse workplace inhibits organizational effectiveness by introducing potentially contentious intergroup dynamics (Thomas, Mack, Montagliani, 2004). Given the negativity toward AAPs, a study conducted by Richard (2000) supported the argument that organizational diversity does in fact have a tangible benefit to an organization by improving its employee's productivity and strategic growth, which in turn supports the necessity of AAPs (Thomas et al., 2004). Even so, among college students in particular, male and female White Americans show the least supportive stance toward AAPs of any racial group (Smith, 1998). Given this, it has become increasingly important to clearly understand and define predictors of non-beneficiaries' attitudes toward AAPs as a way to potentially change attitudes and increase support of them in organizations.

Non-beneficiary Attitudes toward Affirmative Action Programs

Researchers have explored how program features and perceiver characteristics impact AAP attitudes for more than thirty years. Studies regarding program features, in essence the framework and structure of the program, have focused largely on the extent to which the AAP gives attention to the applicant's demographic characteristics. On the other hand, perceiver characteristics have received much more consideration and have aimed to understand what about the person evaluating the AAP leads him or her to react in a certain way towards the program. This research often revolves around the perceiver's personality traits, demographics, experiences and beliefs (Harrison et al., 2006).

Program features. Harrison and colleagues (2006) meta-analytically examined attitudes towards AAPs, and account for AAPs prescriptiveness, or the extent to which the program influences the discretion of the selection decision maker, to explain reactions to affirmative action. The following four types of AAPs, in order of increasing prescriptiveness, were included: opportunity enhancement, focused on recruiting and training target groups; equal opportunity, geared towards eliminating negative weight placed on target groups; tiebreak, in which target groups are given preference only if their qualifications are equivalent to others; and strong preferential treatment, which gives preference to the target group regardless of qualifications. The hypothesis of an inverse relationship between AAP prescriptiveness and attitudes towards AAPs was confirmed, proving that the structural characteristics of the policy affect the perceiver's attitude toward affirmative action (Harrison et al., 2006).

The results showed that programs that gave more consideration to an applicant's demographic characteristics elicited more negative responses. Strong preferential treatment programs were met with the most negative reactions while opportunity-oriented programs, which

encompassed both opportunity enhancement and equal opportunity programs, had the most positive reactions. This study distinguished that prescriptiveness does in fact affect attitudes towards affirmative action, indicating that perceivers will respond more positively with a program that does not promote preferential treatment for a target group over others (Harrison et al., 2006). While it provided evidence for the effect of program features, it did not account for individual characteristics that may have affected the strength of these reactions as a result of program features.

Perceiver characteristics. Several studies have examined the relationship between perceiver characteristics and attitudes toward AAPs, looking to demographic characteristics (e.g., race or gender) as well as psychological characteristics (e.g., political ideology, racism, self-interest; Harrison et al., 2006). For instance, Knowles and Lowery (2012) found that belief in meritocracy was related to a denial of White privilege.

A belief in meritocracy has been shown to predict the denial of White privilege, and furthermore, the need to elevate self-concepts strengthened the relationship between meritocracy and White privilege. This study not only provided evidence that belief in meritocracy correlates with a denial of White privilege, but it suggested that this relationship then contributes to a negative predisposition against AAPs (Knowles & Lowery, 2012). Self-enhancement was supported as the underlying mechanism by which attitudes towards AAPs can be understood due to the fact that an elevation of self-concepts was demonstrated to contribute to a denial of White privilege, and thereby incline the perceiver against the AAP (Knowles & Lowery, 2012). However, this study did not directly measure how differences in meritocracy may affect attitudes towards AAPs or self-images, and therefore, it is crucial to further study this.

An examination of the relationship between belief in meritocracy, diversity experiences, and attitudes toward AAPs gave further lend to the idea that belief in meritocracy has an effect on a perceivers' perception of the program (Aberson, 2007). It was determined that in a White sample population, the higher the belief in meritocracy, the more negative the attitudes toward affirmative action were, and experiences with diversity were negatively correlated with belief in meritocracy; this is in part due to the fact that those who believe highly in meritocracy feel that affirmative action policies violate the distribute justice laws of fairness (Aberson, 2007). Considering these findings, it may be crucial to examine how manipulation of the framing of an AAP is impacted by belief in meritocracy.

White guilt is also a related perceiver characteristic that has been examined in relation to AAP attitudes. In a series of studies, it was demonstrated that White guilt significantly predicted attitudes toward AAPs such that a higher expression of White guilt led to a more negative attitude toward the program (Swim & Miller, 1999). It was also shown that White guilt led to more negative personal evaluations of Whites as a whole, supporting the idea that White guilt in fact leads to more negative self-images among a White population (Swim & Miller, 1999). This study determined that stronger belief in White guilt correlates to a higher belief in White privilege. In turn, belief in White guilt predicts attitudes towards affirmative action, with belief in White guilt leading to higher attitudes towards affirmative action.

Similar to the study by Knowles and Lowery (2012), this study provides evidence for why White guilt should be further examined in the self-enhancement framework. If a belief in White guilt predicted more positive attitudes towards affirmative action, then manipulations of the program framing must be conducted to further analyze how much White guilt can influence the effect of program framing on attitudes towards affirmative action.

Given all of the existing literature on non-beneficiaries, perceiver characteristics and program framing, it becomes increasingly important to provide a framework by which attitudes toward affirmative action as a whole can be understood. Previous studies have focused largely on either perceiver characteristics or program framing, but the combined effect of both is crucial to study and has not been extensively studied so far. Because both have been shown to have significant effects on attitudes toward AAPs, the extent to which the combination of policy framing and perceiver characteristics predicts attitudes toward AAPs must be delineated for future insight on how to best elicit a positive response from non-beneficiaries of an AAP. A self-enhancement theory model has been supported and may provide that framework.

Self-Enhancement and AA Attitudes

Self-enhancement theory describes individuals as acting increase the positivity and decrease the negativity of their self-conceptions (Sedikides & Strube, 1997). Taking a self-enhancement approach to explaining gender differences in attitudes towards AAPs, Hideg and Ferris (2014) conducted a study determining whether self-concepts, or self-images, were threatened by AAPs. They explored self-image across three dimensions: performance (ability to succeed in a work setting), social (attractiveness to others in a social group), and appearance (physical look; Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). Men, who were the non-beneficiaries of a gender-based affirmative action program were expected to experience negative self-images due to the existence of systemic privilege that has advantaged men. Conversely, beneficiaries of the program, women, were expected to experience negative self-images because of the possibility of failure even with the assistance provided by an affirmative action program. The results showed that both groups expressed negative performance, social, and appearance self-images when presented with the AAP, showing that that AAPs may pose a threat to self-interest and self-

image. The study then sought to discuss program framing by presenting a diversity-framed policy that promoted the recruitment of individuals from target populations and a tradition AAP that addressed past discrimination towards target groups. Men expressed higher self-images when viewing a diversity-framed policy (compared to a past discrimination framing) while women's self-images were unaffected; self-images in turn predicted attitudes toward AAPs (Hideg & Ferris, 2014).

Although these studies explored how men and women differ on attitudes towards gender-based affirmative action, a self-enhancement approach may also be useful in understanding race differences on race-based affirmative action. Specifically, theoretical work on White identity management (Knowles, Lowery, Chow & Unzueta, 2014) consider how Whites attempt to maintain a positive self-concept and respond to potentially identity threatening practices and events.

White Identity Management and AA Attitudes

As Whites are the majority of people composing the American workforce, several studies have examined ideologies of Whites in explaining attitudes toward AAPs. The quality of "whiteness" has long been acknowledged for its centrality in creating racial inequality (Knowles et al., 2014). Knowles and colleagues (2014) presented a theoretical framework for understanding how Whites manage their self-concept and shield themselves from the psychological threats that accompany whiteness. The article proposed that Whites do not have an invisible identity, as previously thought, because they are constantly presented with reminders of their whiteness through interactions with their out-group, mass media and shifting viewpoints towards support of multicultural societies. Furthermore, it was proposed that the quality of whiteness poses psychological threats in the form of group-image guilt and meritocratic threat.

Group-image guilt occurs when an individual is associated with a race that has benefited unfairly over other racial groups, and meritocratic threat exists when the concept that an individual has not rightfully earned his or her achievements. Therefore, being white is thought to bring about group-image guilt and meritocratic threat. Further, Knowles et al. (2014) proposed a deny, distance and dismantle model that suggested that in reference to affirmative action programs, Whites deny by choosing to believe that AAPs use minority quotas instead of the idea that AAPs attempt to correct previous discrimination and injustices to racial minorities; this allows them to maintain positive self-concepts that they have earned their social status and privileges in the workplace. They also proposed that Whites may distance themselves from their racial identity or dismantle the system, in the case of psychological coping mechanisms for experiencing group-image guilt, by supporting in-group threatening policies such as AAPs (Knowles et al., 2014).

This work provided a full theory for how Whites may experience threats to their self-concepts or self-images, and how they may react to AAPs as a result. On one hand, denying and distancing techniques would contribute to opposition to AAPs, while dismantling techniques would lead Whites to support AAPs. The Knowles et al., (2014) study provided a platform upon which one can understand how non-beneficiaries respond to an AAP, and therefore the present study seeks to use this framework to predict that attitudes toward AAPs will vary based on levels of importance of meritocracy to one's self-concept and perceived meritocratic threat.

By and large, previous examinations have set the foundation for looking into self-enhancement as a framework by which affirmative action can be understood. While Hideg and Ferris (2014) looked into group differences into how program features (e.g., diversity framing) affect self-images, other variables such as group-image guilt (i.e., the feeling of guilt surrounding ones racial group) and meritocratic threat (i.e., the idea that one's earned position is

undermined), may impact the strength of the relationship. These variables also present a threat to self-enhancement and may contribute to understanding why people oppose or favorite affirmative action.

Present Study

The present study uses the existing literature on White identity management and self-enhancement theory as a framework for further understanding non-beneficiary attitudes toward race-based AAPs among Whites. Specifically, I explore whether program framing, belief in meritocracy and group-image guilt interact to predict non-beneficiaries' self-images and attitudes toward AAPs. Hideg and Ferris (2014) determined that when presented with a diversity-framed AAP, males had more positive performance, social, and appearance self-images than when presented with a regularly-framed AAP (i.e., past discrimination framing), while the framing had no effect on females. As Whites are non-beneficiaries of race-based AAPs, this framing is expected to impact their self-image as well. Further, Knowles et al. (2014) proposed that in order to accommodate for experienced threats to meritocracy, Whites may deny the existence of privilege. This suggests that White individuals who possess high beliefs in meritocracy would be most susceptible to having their self-image impacted, particularly their performance and social self-images (appearance self-image is not thought to be relevant in this case).

Support for the idea that self-images vary among different presentations of AAPs has been evidenced (Hideg & Ferris, 2014), so it is hypothesized that self-images overall will be lower in a regularly-framed program. Moreover, meritocratic threat has been linked to negative self-images (Knowles et al., 2014), so it is proposed that those for whom belief in meritocracy is stronger will have more negative performance and social self-images when experiencing a meritocratic threat in the form of a regularly-framed policy.

Hypothesis 1a: Policy framing and belief in meritocracy will interact to predict performance self-images such that participants high in meritocratic beliefs will have lower self-images when presented with the regular framing condition in comparison to the diversity framing condition. Participants high in meritocratic belief will have more positive performance self-images than those low in meritocratic belief within the regular-framing condition, and there will be no difference between low and high meritocracy participants within the diversity-framing condition.

Hypothesis 1b: Policy framing and belief in meritocracy will interact to predict social self-images such that participants high in meritocratic beliefs will have lower self-images when presented with the regular framing condition in comparison to the diversity framing condition. Participants high in meritocratic belief will have more positive social self-images than those low in meritocratic belief within the regular-framing condition, and there will be no difference between low and high meritocracy participants within the diversity-framing condition.

Hypothesis 1c: Policy framing and belief in meritocracy will interact to predict attitudes toward AAPs such that participants high in meritocratic beliefs will have more negative attitudes toward AAPs when presented with the regular framing condition in comparison to the diversity framing condition. Participants high in meritocratic belief will have more positive attitudes toward AAPs than those low in meritocratic belief within the regular-framing condition, and there will be no difference between low and high meritocracy participants within the diversity-framing condition.

In addition, because group-image threat may present a threat to self-image (Knowles et al., 2014), non-beneficiary Whites presented with a regularly-framed AAP that highlights past injustices toward racial minorities are proposed to have the most negative performance and social self-images.

Hypothesis 2a: Policy framing and group-image guilt will interact to predict performance self-images such that participants high in group-image guilt will have more negative performance self-images when presented with the regular framing condition in comparison to the diversity framing condition. Participants high in group-image guilt will have negative performance self-images than those low in group-image guilt within the regular-framing condition, and there will be no difference between low and high group-image guilt participants within the diversity-framing condition.

Hypothesis 2b: Policy framing and group-image guilt interact to predict social self-images such that participants high in group-image guilt will have more negative social self-images when presented with the regular framing condition in comparison to the diversity framing condition. Participants high in group-image guilt will have negative social self-images than those low in group-image guilt within the regular-framing

condition, and there will be no difference between low and high group-image guilt participants within the diversity-framing condition.

Knowles et al. (2014) suggested that in order to mediate threats to self-concepts through perceived group-image guilt, Whites attempt to embrace policies that reduce in-group privilege. Given that diversity-framed AAPs bring about more positive attitudes toward AAPs, it is suggested that Whites in the diversity condition who express group-image guilt will have the most positive views of the program.

Hypothesis 2c: Policy framing and group-image guilt will interact to predict attitudes toward AAPs such that participants high in group-image guilt will have more negative attitudes toward AAPs when presented with the regular framing condition in comparison to the diversity framing condition. Participants high in group-image guilt will have more positive attitudes toward AAPs than those low in group-image guilt within the regular-framing condition, and there will be no difference between low and high group-image guilt participants within the diversity-framing condition.

Chapter 2

Methods

Participants

Two hundred and sixty undergraduate students participated in this study that examined reactions to an affirmative action policy proposed by a fictional company. The sample included 185 White students, 14 Hispanic/Latinx students, 14 Black students, 45 Asian students and 2 that declined to answer. For the purpose of this study, only the responses of the White students were analyzed. Of the students identifying as White, 92 were male, 92 were female and one declined to answer. After eliminating responses due to failure to properly answer quality control questions or high suspicion of the study's purpose, 168 participants remained, 82 of which were male and 86 of which were female. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 31 ($M=19.22$, $SD=1.487$) and in year of college with 110 first-year students, 28 second-year, 17 third-year and 13 fourth-year students. They were employed for an average of 2.28 years ($SD=1.721$).

Procedure

Participants were recruited through the Penn State SONA Subject Pool for the half-hour online study, and students received course credit for their involvement. The questionnaire was administered via Penn State Qualtrics software. Subjects were first asked to consent to the study by reading a brief overview of the study and procedures with the ostensible purpose of the study being to understand reactions toward a proposed co-op hiring Affirmative Action policy for the fictional Smith & Company. Afterwards, they were asked to fill out a questionnaire that consisted of four parts. The first part included measures of preference for meritocracy and group image guilt, dispersed within a 60-item personality measure to reduce suspicion about the purpose of the study. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of two affirmative action

policy conditions (regularly-framed versus diversity-framed). Subjects were asked about their self-images and attitudes toward the affirmative action policy, and finally were asked a series of demographic questions. All measures in this study utilized a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Manipulations

Both manipulations were adapted from Hideg and Ferris (2014). The regularly-framed affirmative action policy highlighted that the fictional Smith & Company would favor racial minority candidates over White candidates for an internship program due to the past discrimination and current inequality that has led racial minorities to be underrepresented (see Appendix A). On the other hand, the diversity-framed policy emphasized diversification of the applicant pool for Smith & Company's internship program, and did not mention previous discrimination against racial minorities or biases that favored Whites in the hiring process (see Appendix B). Both policies did, however, mention that racial minorities would be hired only if the qualifications of the racial minority were equal to those of the White candidate.

Measures

Preference for Merit Principle Scale. Belief in meritocracy was measured by a 15-item scale developed by Davey, Bobocel, Hing, Zanna (1999, $\alpha = .673$). Participants were asked questions regarding their opinions on merit-based outcomes with questions such as, "Between two equally smart students applying for the same job, the one who is the harder worker ought to always get the job." Subjects scoring high on this scale were marked as having a higher preference for merit-based outcomes in the workplace.

Group-Image Guilt. The group-image guilt measure used in this study was adapted from Doosje, Branscombe, Spears and Manstead (2006). The 5-item scale ($\alpha = .873$), which can be

found in Appendix C, asked participants to rate their agreement with statements that measured how much guilt they felt due to their association with their specified racial group with questions such as, “I feel guilty about the benefits and privileges that I receive as a member of my racial/ethnic group.”

State Self-Esteem Scale. This 20-item scale was the same used in the Hideg and Ferris (2014) study on which the current study was modeled, but it was originally developed by Heatherton and Polivy (1999, $\alpha = .936$). This measure was composed of three subscales: performance, social and appearance self-esteem. Performance self-esteem referred to a participant’s view of his or her ability to succeed in a workplace or academic setting; questions in this subscale include, “I feel confident that I understand things.” Social self-esteem referenced a participant’s view on his or her social attractiveness with questions like, “I feel concerned about the impression that I’m making.” The third subscale, which was excluded for the purpose of this study, included questions regarding physical appearance. The State Self-Esteem Scale was used to measure a participant’s self-images.

Attitudes Toward the AAP. Attitudes toward the affirmative action policy presented were assessed through a 3-item measure adapted from Hideg, Michela, and Ferris (2011), ($\alpha = .928$). This measure asked participants to rate their agreement with statements such as “The proposed Affirmative Action program is fair.”

Chapter 3

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics of the participant population, including age, year in school and average employment, were analyzed and are presented in Appendix D, Table 1. Additionally, correlations between variables were analyzed and are presented in Appendix D, Table 2.

Notable correlations include group-image guilt and performance self-images, $r(168) = -.402$, $p < .001$, group-image guilt and social self-images, $r(168) = -.407$, $p < .001$, and group-image guilt and attitudes toward AAPs $r(168) = .434$, $p < .001$. Performance self-images and belief in meritocracy were significantly correlated as well, $r(168) = .245$, $p < .001$. However, belief in meritocracy is not significantly correlated with attitudes in AAPs or self-images nor is it significantly correlated to group-image guilt.

Hypothesis Testing

Using the IBM SPSS 22 statistical analysis software, an ANOVA test (policy [regularly-framed and diversity-framed] x belief in meritocracy) was conducted to test the effect on performance self-images. There was not a significant interaction between policy framing and belief in meritocracy, $F(1,162) = 2.039$, $p = .155$. However, there was a significant main effect of belief in meritocracy on performance self-images, $F(1,162) = 10.318$, $p < .005$. There were no main effects for policy framing or age on performance self-images. The ANOVA results for this model are presented in Appendix E, Table 3.

An ANOVA test (policy [regularly-framed and diversity-framed] x belief in meritocracy) was conducted to test the effect on social self-images. There was not a significant interaction between policy framing and belief in meritocracy, $F(1,162) = 3.369$, $p = .068$. Additionally, there

were no main effects of policy framing, belief in meritocracy, or age on performance self-images. The ANOVA results for this model are presented in Appendix E, Table 4.

An ANOVA (policy [regularly-framed and diversity-framed] x belief in meritocracy) was conducted for the effect on attitudes toward AAPs. There was not a significant interaction between policy framing, and meritocracy, $F(1,162)= 2.203$, $p=.140$. Furthermore, there was no significant main effects of age, belief in meritocracy or AAP framing on attitudes toward AAPs. The ANOVA results for this model are presented in Appendix E, Table 5.

Again, an ANOVA test (policy [regularly-framed and diversity-framed] x group-image guilt) was conducted to determine the effect on performance self-images. There was not a significant two-way interaction $F(1,162)= 1.202$, $p= .274$. Nonetheless, there was a significant main effect of group-image guilt on performance self-images $F(1,162)= 32.114$, $p<.001$. The results of this analysis are presented in Appendix F, Table 6.

Another (policy [regularly-framed and diversity-framed] x group-image guilt) ANOVA test was conducted to determine the effect on social self-images. There was not a significant two-way interaction $F(1,162)= 2.921$, $p= .089$. There was, again, a significant main effect of group-image guilt on social self-images $F(1,162)= 34.055$, $p<.001$. The results of this analysis are presented in Appendix F, Table 7.

Finally, an ANOVA test (policy [regularly-framed and diversity-framed] x group-image guilt) was conducted to test the effect on attitudes toward AAPs. The two-way interaction between AAP framing and group-image guilt was not significant, $F(1,162)= 1.228$, $p=.269$. The main effect of group-image guilt on attitudes toward AAPs was significant, $F(1,162)= 37.817$, $p<.001$. The remaining results are presented in Appendix F, Table 8.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The goal of this research was to build on previous research conducted by Hideg and Ferris (2014) to examine the effect of beliefs in meritocracy and group-image guilt and policy framing on self-images and attitudes toward AAPs of non-beneficiaries of race-based affirmative action. It was hypothesized that there would be significant interactions between belief in meritocracy or group-image guilt and the affirmative action policy framing on self-images and attitudes toward AAPs.

Preliminary correlational analyses of the variables included in the study resulted in a significant negative correlation between group-image guilt and both self-image subscales as well as attitudes toward AAPs, which indicates that the higher a person's expression of group-image guilt, the lower his or her self-image and the more positive his or her attitude toward the program. This is congruent with the previous literature from studies such as Swim and Miller (1999) that determined that White guilt was correlated with attitudes toward affirmative action and even mediated the relationship between beliefs about White privilege and attitudes toward AAPs. Further, the correlation of group-image guilt and self-images was in line with the findings of Swim and Miller (1999), which concluded that expression of White guilt was associated with negative views of Whites as a whole. The affirmation of these correlations may give rise to future research on group-image guilt and self-images and attitudes toward AAPs within different manipulations of the policy.

Though the correlations were significant, Hypothesis 1a and 1b were not supported due to a nonsignificant interaction between the policy framing and belief in meritocracy in predicting self-images. However, a significant main effect of meritocracy on performance self-images

among non-beneficiaries supports the idea that belief in meritocracy predicts how an individual feels about his or her ability to perform well. This supports the White identity and self-enhancement frameworks that suggest meritocratic beliefs may elevate self-images, possibly due to denying the existence of privilege (Knowles & Lowery, 2014).

The nonsignificant findings of hypothesis 1c do not support established relationship of belief in meritocracy and attitudes toward AAPs (Aberson, 2007), and the previous literature was not supported by a main effect of belief in meritocracy on the attitudes toward AAPs either. It is perhaps that the attitudes toward AAPs were not accurately assessed because the measure focused on whether the policy was beneficial and did not include items regarding whether or not a person would like to work at a company with the program.

Hypothesis 2a and 2b were also not supported by significant findings, which shows that in this setting group-image guilt and policy framing do not interact to affect self-images, both performance-based and social. This may be due to the fact that the policies used in this study did not explicitly mention past wrongdoings of a particular race in bringing about the systemic discrimination toward minorities; instead, the policies made mention of the inequities but did not highlight the role of one group creating the discrimination.

Hypothesis 2c was also not supported by a significant interaction between policy framing and group-image guilt in predicting attitudes toward AAPs. Again, this may be due to the fact that the attitudes toward affirmative action program measure may have inaccurately represented the construct. However, there was a significant main effect of group-image guilt on both types of self-images as well as attitudes toward AAPs, indicating that group-image guilt does play a role in how a non-beneficiary feels about the program. This is congruent with Knowles et al., (2014) dismantle framework, which suggested that when experiencing group-image guilt, a person may

be more likely to think positively about the program. Furthermore, it lends credence to the idea that group-image guilt weakens positive self-images (Knowles et al., 2014).

Limitations

A main limitation of this study is the sample, which consisted of a White undergraduate population at a large Northeastern university. This sample is not representative of the broader United States, as the mean age was just above 19 years old, and it does not reflect the entire working population. Furthermore, most of the participants of this study were first and second year students who may not have had an experience with the working world. Though they may have an understanding of affirmative action programs as they relate to entering college, many of them have not held jobs or internship positions nor have they applied for them, and therefore, the manipulations may not have been directly applicable to them.

Practical Implication

Though the hypotheses of this study were not supported, the main effects of group-image guilt on attitudes toward AAPs and the effects of group-image guilt and meritocracy on self-images do support a self-enhancement framework. Considering the idea that non-beneficiaries of an AAP work to elevate their self-concepts, and harming their self-concepts may lead to negative reactions to the programs, those structuring the program should focus on maintenance of positive self-concepts. This may come in the form of highlighting diversity instead of eliciting guilt due to past discrimination toward racial minorities.

Future Directions

Though there seems to be evidence in the literature to support examining the interaction between belief and meritocracy and group-image guilt and policy framing on attitudes toward AAPs, future studies might consider different measures of self-images. Further inspection of a

participants' self-images regarding whether or not he or she feels that she can thrive in the workplace may give lend to a better understanding of how self-images are affected. Beyond that, further manipulations of the policy framing to understand how the policy prescriptiveness interacts with perceiver characteristics would be beneficial; the present study sought to understand how a more preferential program would fare in relation to a more opportunity-enhancement program, but within opportunity-enhancement there exists varying degrees of prescriptiveness (i.e., focus on recruiting a diverse applicant pool or eliminating the existing negative weight attributed to minorities) that provide a useful avenue of exploration. Future research may also make use of other indicators of reactions to AAPs such as behavioral intentions to promote an affirmative action program and perceptions of the policy's fairness.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This study did not support the proposed hypotheses with significant interactions, but limitations may have hindered the sample from effectively measuring how non-beneficiaries' self-images and attitudes toward AAPs were affected by policy framing and both belief in meritocracy and group-image guilt. While the study did not provide evidence for the combined effect of policy framing and perceiver characteristics, there is partial support for understanding non-beneficiary attitudes toward AAPs through a self-enhancement framework. For one, group-image guilt was shown to have an effect on both self-images and attitudes toward AAPs, indicating that AAPs may bring about negative self-images within those not benefiting from the program.

Because Whites make up much of the working population in the United States, this study was important to help make sense of why Whites overall react negatively to AAPs; furthermore, this can be used to more effectively integrate AAPs into the workplace, focusing on more opportunity-enhancing framing techniques and shying away from highlighting previous discrimination toward racial minorities.

Chapter 6

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Appendix A

Regularly-framed Affirmative Action Policy

The United States Census Bureau's 2010 report showed that while Black, Asian and Hispanic/Latino minorities make up more than a 30% of the total American workforce, they tend to be concentrated in occupations of lower status and pay. Minorities make up more than 40% of the total population currently employed in both manual labor and service jobs and only 20% of those in management and business positions. This uneven distribution of minorities across certain positions can be mostly attributed to past discrimination in employment systems. To address these inequalities, many organizations in the United States of America implement affirmative action (AA) policies. AA policies refer to the elimination of unfair practices that prevent the entry, promotion, or retention of racial minorities in the workplace. Smith & Company is also committed to the principles of affirmative action and implements an AA policy for racial minorities when hiring full-time employees. However, there is no AA policy in place for internship hiring and this may present an important area for an expansion of this policy at Smith & Company. Research involving students hired to Smith & Company estimates that the hiring rate of minority students for certain, more desirable internships is 30% and the hiring rate for White students is 70%. The proportion of minority students hired for certain jobs does not reflect the proportion of minority students compared to White students. To address this imbalance, a new affirmative action policy for minorities is proposed to be implemented for student internship hiring. This proposed AA policy suggests the target hiring rate for minority students to be 50%, an increase of 20%. This would mean that the hiring rate for minorities would increase for internship positions in which they are currently underrepresented. This AA

policy would involve Black, Asian and Hispanic/Latino students over White students only if they had equal qualifications.

Appendix B

Diversity-Framed Affirmative Action Policy

In today's highly globalized business world, a major imperative for organizations worldwide is to find and hire the best employees. To increase the pool of qualified potential candidates, many organizations have started adopting diversity policies. Diversity policies encourage employees that traditionally have been less represented in management and professional positions (such as minorities) to apply for positions in organizations. To increase the pool of qualified potential candidates, many organizations in the United States of America implement affirmative action (AA) policies. AA policies refer to practices that promote the entry, promotion, or retention of minorities in the workplace. AA policies are thus designed to increase and diversify the pool of high quality candidates, which given today's globalization and difficulty in recruiting top talent makes good business sense for American organizations. In line with this, Smith & Company is proposing to implement a new affirmative action (AA) policy for minorities for student hiring in Smith & Company's internship programs. This proposed AA policy suggests a target hiring rate for minority students of 55%. This would mean that the hiring rate for minorities would increase for internship positions in which they are currently underrepresented. This AA policy would involve hiring Black, Asian and Hispanic/Latino students over White students only if they had equal qualifications.

Appendix C

Group-Image Guilt Measure adapted from Doosje, Branscombe, Spears and Manstead (2006)

1. Although I feel my behavior is typically nondiscriminatory towards other racial/ethnic groups, I still feel guilt due to my association with my race/ethnicity.
2. I feel guilty about the past and present social inequality of other racial/ethnic groups.
3. I do not feel guilty about social inequality between my racial/ethnic group and other racial/ethnic groups. (R)
4. When I learn about racism, I feel guilt due to my association with my racial/ethnic group.
5. I feel guilty about the benefits and privileges that I receive as a member of my racial/ethnic group.

Appendix D

Table 1

<i>Descriptive Statistics of Participant Population</i>			
	N	M	SD
1. Age	166	19.22	1.487
2. Year in School	168	1.60	0.955
3. Years of Employment	168	1.66	0.475

Note. Two participants did not indicate their age.

Table 2

<i>Correlations among Study Variables</i>								
Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Belief in Meritocracy	5.18	.60	--		.			
2. Group Image Guilt	3.79	1.42	.01	--	.			
3. Self-Images Perform	5.08	.98	.25*	-.40*	--			
4. Self-Images Social	4.19	1.20	.00	-.41*	.68*	--		
5. Attitudes toward AAPs	4.41	1.58	-.02	.43*	-.10	-.08	--	
6. AAP Framing	0.04	1.00	.12	-.01	-.06	-.11	-.03	--

Note. *Indicates that the correlation is significant at $p = .01$ level (2-tailed), AAP=Affirmative Action Program, Self-Images Perform=Self-Images Performance Subscale, Self-Images Social=Self-Images Social Subscale

Appendix E

Table 3

Tests of Between Subjects Effects for Performance Self-Images

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	12.606 ^a	4	3.151	3.489	.009	.079
Intercept	.049	1	.049	.054	.816	.000
AAP Framing	.189	1	.189	.209	.648	.001
merit	9.321	1	9.321	10.318	.002	.060
age	1.184	1	1.184	1.311	.254	.008
AAP Framing *merit	1.842	1	1.842	2.039	.155	.012
Error	146.339	162	.903			
Total	158.953	167				

Note. AAP Framing=affirmative action program framing, merit=belief in meritocracy

Table 4

Tests of Between Subjects Effects for Social Self-Images

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	9.225 ^a	4	2.306	1.623	.171	.039
Intercept	.114	1	.114	.080	.777	.000
AAP Framing	2.805	1	2.805	1.975	.162	.012
merit	.091	1	.091	.064	.801	.000
age	1.505	1	1.505	1.059	.305	.006
AAP Framing *merit	4.787	1	4.787	3.369	.068	.020
Error	230.153	162	1.421			
Total	158.953	167				

Note. AAP Framing=affirmative action program framing, merit=belief in meritocracy

Table 5

Tests of Between Subjects Effects for Attitudes toward AAPs

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	8.453 ^a	4	2.113	.839	.502	.020
Intercept	.115	1	.115	.046	.831	.000
AAP Framing	.695	1	.695	.276	.600	.002
merit	.019	1	.019	.008	.931	.000
age	2.076	1	2.076	.824	.365	.005
AAP Framing*merit	5.549	1	5.549	2.203	.140	.013
Error	407.979	162	2.518			
Total	416.433	167				

Note. AAP Framing=affirmative action program framing, merit=belief in meritocracy

Appendix F

Table 6

Tests of Between Subjects Effects for Performance Self-Images

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	28.391 ^a	4	7.098	8.807	.000	.179
Intercept	.003	1	.003	.004	.949	.000
AAP Framing	.581	1	.581	.721	.397	.004
guilt	25.880	1	25.880	32.114	.000	.165
age	1.257	1	1.257	1.560	.213	.010
AAP Framing *guilt	.969	1	.969	1.202	.274	.007
Error	130.555	162	.806			
Total	158.953	167				

Note. AAP Framing=affirmative action program framing, guilt=group-image guilt

Table 7

Tests of Between Subjects Effects for Social Self-Images

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	47.656 ^a	4	11.914	10.067	.000	.199
Intercept	.009	1	.009	.007	.931	.000
AAP Framing	2.862	1	2.862	2.418	.122	.015
guilt	40.303	1	40.303	34.055	.000	.174
age	1.461	1	1.461	1.235	.268	.008
AAP Framing *guilt	3.456	1	3.456	2.921	.089	.018
Error	191.722	162	1.183			
Total	239.379	167				

Note. AAP Framing=affirmative action program framing, guilt=group-image guilt

Table 8

Tests of Between Subjects Effects for Attitudes toward AAPs

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	83.696 ^a	4	20.924	10.187	.000	.201
Intercept	.007	1	.007	.003	.953	.000
AAP Framing	.600	1	.600	.292	.590	.002
guilt	77.672	1	77.672	37.817	.000	.189
age	1.920	1	1.920	.935	.335	.006
AAP Framing*guilt	2.523	1	2.523	1.228	.269	.008
Error	332.737	162	2.054			
Total	416.433	167				

Note. AAP Framing=affirmative action program framing, guilt=group-image guilt

ACADEMIC VITA

ANJALI BHATT

BHATT.ANJALI.G@GMAIL.COM

EDUCATION

The Pennsylvania State University | The Schreyer Honors College**University Park, PA***College of Liberal Arts | Bachelor of Science in Psychology, Neuroscience Option**Class of May 2017**Presidential Leadership Academy | Certificate of Leadership*

Honors Thesis: Understanding how Individual Differences and Policy Framing Influences Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The Vanguard Group**Malvern, PA***College to Corporate Flagship Services Intern**Jun 2016 – Aug 2016*

- Conducted an operational review of the Ultra High Net Worth client support team model by assessing the current functionality and productivity of the team in order to improve call center NPS scores and occupancy rate while driving down handle time
- Devised a proposal to restructure a previously underperforming employee temporary leave coverage process by utilizing the existing infrastructure of another department initiative, which culminated in a readout to senior leadership
- Directed a rebranding effort focused on elevating employee sentiment towards the Flagship Operations team and fostering engagement while maintaining a call center response rate of 85% resulting in the planning and launch of a three-step ACE plan

IBM Case Competition**University Park, PA***Participant and Member of 1st Place Team**April 2016*

- Designed a business strategy to bring the 2028 Olympic Games to Austin, TX by analyzing the host city requirements and using IBM Cloud, Analytics, Mobile, Social and Security capabilities which resulted in an estimated direct profit of \$841 million
- Presented recommendations to senior IBM leaders and answered questions in order to demonstrate problem solving proficiency

Alpha Kappa Psi Co-Ed Professional Business Fraternity**University Park, PA***Co-President of Pledge Class | Fundraising Chair | Rush Chair**Oct 2015 – Present*

- Cooperated with a pledge class of 28 to plan successful career-based, philanthropic, fundraising, and social events in an effort to increase professionalism and unity between the pledge class and the brotherhood of about 90 members
- Raised \$650 towards the fraternity's goal by partnering with other business fraternities to throw fundraisers that benefitted both parties, arranging events that engaged brothers and designing merchandise and leading to lower chapter dues
- Organized 5 brotherhood events and managed a committee of 7 members over 4 months, resulting in the recruitment of 150 rushes and the initiation of 18 pledges

Rajas LLC Consulting**Kennett Square, PA***College Intern**May 2014 – Sep 2014*

- Created a model for the company to assess potential member consultant expertise and profiled consultant background variables to create a comprehensive view of member consultant skillsets and to increase the company's scope of expertise

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Presidential Leadership Academy**University Park, PA***Class of 2017 Undergraduate Member**Mar 2013 – Present*

- Chosen as one of the top 30 members of the Penn State Class of 2017 to participate in a three-year seminar class focused on developing and channeling leadership and critical thinking skills in an effort to improve the Penn State community
- Presented a viable proposal for reforming the Counseling and Psychological Services at Penn State employing critical thinking, deductive and inductive reasoning and ethical decision making skills to find the most favorable result for the university
- Participated in leadership seminars with President Eric Barron of The Pennsylvania State University, Dean Christian Brady of the Schreyer Honors College, and other top university officials in Boston, Puerto Rico, Pittsburgh and New York City

Laboratory for Personality, Psychopathology, and Psychotherapy Research**University Park, PA***Lab Coordinator**Aug 2015 – May 2016*

- Supervised a references conversion project by assigning data sets to individual undergraduate research assistants and compiling weekly progress reports for the principle investigator to assist in lab organization
- Designed research assistant instruction sessions and established a design by which all new members of the lab are trained in Zotero reference management software to ensure that all members are equally equipped to assist with the references project

HONORS/SKILLS/INTERESTS

- Honors: Gerald L. Bayles Memorial Scholarship for Academic Excellence, College of Liberal Arts Scholarship for Academic Excellence, Paterno Fellows Honors Program, Dean's List
- Skills: Proficient in Microsoft Office products (Excel, PowerPoint, Word), SPSS and STATA, Working knowledge of Spanish and Tamil
- Interests: Arranging music, Cheese-tasting, Cliff diving, Fleetwood Mac, Food from Around the World, Golf, Hiking, Road Trips, Skiing