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Not all diversity is created equal: The preference for socioeconomic diversity and its implications

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NOT ALL DIVERSITY IS CREATED EQUAL: THE PREFERENCE FOR SOCIOECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Leon Jakob Mait

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Abstract

In public discourse around higher education, diversity based on socioeconomic status (SES) is often presented as an alternative to diversity based on race/ethnicity. In particular, the Supreme Court's 2023 ban on race-based affirmative action gave new energy to calls for SES-based diversity efforts. This dissertation seeks to uncover people's perceptions of SES diversity versus racial diversity and the downstream consequences of these perceptions. In the first chapter, I examine how people differentially apply moral and instrumental diversity rationales to the two diversity types. I find that among White (but not Black) Americans, SES diversity is moralized more than racial diversity. I then document a number of perceptions about the beneficiaries of either diversity type that underly this effect. In the second chapter, I show how moralization drives support for specific diversity efforts more so than instrumentalization, particularly for strong (vs. weak) diversity efforts. As such, given the differences in moralization, White Americans report greater support for strong SES-diversity policies than strong racial-diversity policies. In the last chapter, I investigate how people respond to institutional SES- and racial-diversity efforts. I find that White Americans exhibit more positive attitudes toward SES diversity and more negative attitudes toward racial diversity. Contrary to the hypotheses, Black Americans do not differentiate between the two diversity types. The current work contributes to the abundance of research on White Americans' cognitions about diversity, and speaks to the insights gained from studying diversity as a disaggregated construct.

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Introduction

In American society today, a college education is widely seen as vital to an economically and socially comfortable life (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Ostrove & Cole, 2003). This view is underscored by data documenting numerous associations between educational attainment and different positive life outcomes (Easterbrook et al., 2016; Hout, 2012). Given the sizable economic opportunities afforded to students after college, as well as the resources dedicated to students during college (Hoxby, 2009), higher education is a valuable and highly sought-after resource. Thus, efforts to improve underrepresented groups' access to this resource are widely scrutinized and debated (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). In the last few decades, the specific focus of such efforts—and corresponding debates—have largely centered on improving access for students from racial/ethnic minority groups and from low socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds (for discussions, see Berrey, 2011; Hurd & Plaut, 2018; Pruitt, 2015a). In the following dissertation, I propose that there are important distinctions in the way people think and talk about diversity depending on whether it refers to race/ethnicity or SES. These distinctions have critical implications for how strongly either type of diversity is pursued, and in turn, the choice to pursue SES versus racial diversity may have downstream consequences for students' university experiences.

Using the lens of diversity rationales (Starck et al., 2021), Chapter 1 examines how people distinctly rationalize SES diversity and racial diversity, that is, the extent to which they endorse moral and instrumental rationales toward either kind of diversity. Chapter 2 draws upon the field of moral psychology and extant research showing the importance of specifically *moral* attitudes in driving pro-attitude behavior (Skitka et al., 2021) to demonstrate how the endorsement of moral rationales relates to support for SES- versus racial-diversity policies.

Finally, inspired by work on the signaling function of diversity initiatives (Dover et al., 2020), Chapter 3 examines how White and Black individuals respond to institutions that pursue SES- versus racial-diversity policies. Before turning to the research, the following sections provide a brief background on racial and SES diversity in American higher education.

Racial versus SES Diversity in Higher Education

The efforts to increase racial/ethnic diversity in American higher education have been highly publicized and contentious. In the 1960s and '70s, colleges and universities began implementing race-based affirmative action programs to actively expand the enrollment of underrepresented racial/ethnic minority (URM) students. The first Supreme Court challenge to such policies came in 1978, when the University of California Davis School of Medicine was sued for setting aside a specific number of seats to URM students (*Regents of University of California v. Bakke*, 1978). The court ultimately decided that race could be used as one of many factors in university admissions (though the specific framing of this decision had some negative consequences, discussed in Chapter 1). A number of cases followed that upheld the constitutionality of considering race in the admissions process as a means to promote racial/ethnic diversity (e.g., *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 2003; *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). However, there have been numerous challenges to racial-diversity policies since, culminating in the recent Supreme Court ban on race-based affirmative action across the country (*Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. V. President & Fellows of Harvard College [SFFA v. Harvard]*, 2023).

Though perhaps less contentious, there have also long been efforts specifically targeting students from lower-income families. In 1947, President Truman's Commission on Higher Education released a set of recommendations to increase access to higher education. In addition to ending racial discrimination, religious discrimination, and "antifeminism", the Commission

called for an elimination of financial barriers (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). This was the precursor to President Johnson's Higher Education Act of 1965, which aimed to expand post-secondary education opportunities to students from lower- and middle-income families through financial assistance (Haskins et al., 2009). Historically, efforts such as these were rarely explicitly framed as "SES diversity." Recently, however, there have been more direct concerted efforts to pursue SES diversity, coupled with a growing awareness of issues specifically facing first-generation and/or low-income (FLI) students (Piper, 2018). As a quintessential example of this, in 2016, the American Talent Initiative was formed. This initiative is a Bloomberg Philanthropies-funded collaboration between close to 150 colleges and universities across the nation seeking to enroll and graduate an additional 50,000 lower-income students by 2025 (Kurzweil et al., 2021). Perhaps in part due to schools' active pursuit of attracting FLI students, the proportion of low-income students in higher education has indeed nearly doubled within the last 50 years (Cahalan et al., 2021). And in contrast to racial-diversity efforts, these SES-diversity efforts have largely been proposed or implemented with little public backlash.

Interestingly, the debate surrounding diversity in higher education often juxtaposes race and SES, despite the strong association between the two (for discussions, see Harris, 2017; Pruitt, 2015a). More than half of Black students at four-year institutions are low income, compared to only about a quarter of White students (Taylor & Turk, 2019). In other words, there is a large overlap between students that are *racial* minorities and those that are *SES* minorities. However, debates of diversity rarely touch on the intersection of race and SES (though see Brown-Nagin, 2014; Feingold, 2020; O'Hearn, 2015). As a prime example, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia argued that race-based affirmative action would prioritize "the son of a prosperous and well-educated black doctor or lawyer—solely because of his race—to the son of

a recent refugee from Eastern Europe who is working as a manual laborer to get his family ahead" (Scalia, 1979, pp. 153–154). As a comparison to students targeted by race-based affirmative action, Scalia invokes a student from a (likely White) working-class family, rather than, say, a White student from a similarly prosperous and well-educated family. As this quote illustrates, class has become a foil to race. Legal scholars continuously debate the merits of race- versus SES-based affirmative action (e.g., Bridges, 2017; Kahlenberg & Potter, 2012). And these debates have made their way to more public outlets such as *The New York Times* (McWhorter, 2022) and *The Washington Post* (Strauss, 2017). Entire books have even been dedicated to the topic (Cashin, 2014). And social psychological research as well tends to focus on only one identity (for a discussion, see Harackiewicz et al., 2016). Thus, it seems the broader discussion of diversity largely ignores intersectionality and often paints SES-diversity efforts and racial-diversity efforts as zero sum.

The Current Work

The goal of the present research is to shed light on the juxtaposition between SES diversity and racial diversity in higher education by identifying how perceptions of the two kinds of diversity differ and what effect this juxtaposition might have on institutions and students. Chapter 1 examines how the public's attitudes toward SES diversity differ from those toward racial diversity, specifically in terms of the diversity rationales applied thereto. Chapter 2 investigates the implications these divergent rationales have on policy support. Finally, Chapter 3 explores the psychosocial effects that the broader societal shift toward SES diversity might have on students.

This research is of critical importance because the manner in which diversity is framed and discussed has potentially dire consequences for minoritized groups. Previous research on

diversity cognitions and climates indicates that different ways of framing diversity can be harmful or helpful for different constituencies (Leslie & Flynn, 2022). For example, while some ways of framing diversity might be harmful to one minoritized group (e.g., Black men and women), that same framing could be beneficial to another minoritized group (e.g., White women; Apfelbaum et al., 2016). The current research builds on previous work on diversity cognitions by examining how *specific kinds* of diversity—namely, SES and racial diversity—are framed. The framing of either kind of diversity, especially if those frames differ from one another, may impact some minoritized groups differently than others, for example, low-SES URM versus low-SES White students, or low-SES versus high-SES URM students.

Moreover, understanding the perceptions of different kinds of diversity can provide insight into why public support for some policies is higher than for others. Drawing from previous literature, different ways of framing diversity are differentially associated with pro-diversity behavior. For example, people who believe that diversity is important because it improves organizational outcomes (e.g., enhances decision-making) are less likely to engage in behaviors that promote racial diversity compared to those who believe that diversity is important because it addresses historical and contemporary discrimination (Bowman Williams & Cox, 2022). Such equity-based perspectives toward diversity—though here the diversity in question is being defined broadly or ambiguously—are consistently shown to be linked to positive treatment of and support for marginalized groups (e.g., Starck et al., 2021; Trawalter et al., 2016). With that in mind, it is conceivable that holding an equity-based perspective toward one specific diversity type more strongly than toward another would likewise be associated with divergent levels of support directed at different social groups.

Finally, understanding this link between different framings of diversity and support for practical solutions to promote diversity can suggest avenues to increase support for these solutions. One study found, for example, that exposing White individuals to a diversity statement promoting a "diversity is fair" perspective increased their propensity to select a Black applicant in a hiring scenario compared to exposing them to a diversity statement promoting a "diversity is good for organizational outcomes" perspective (Trawalter et al., 2016). In other words, it may be possible to shift people's preferences and behaviors by first shifting either their mindsets regarding diversity or the perceived norms coming from the top. Thus, if the disparate levels of support for SES- versus racial-diversity policies stem from the idiosyncratic framing thereof, then targeting framing is a promising avenue to reduce these disparities in support. Although shifting policy support is outside the scope of this dissertation, documenting the link between diversity framing and support is a necessary prerequisite thereto.

Chapter 1: The Moralization of SES Diversity

In the United States and other advanced economies around the world today, most people express positive sentiments toward diversity in society (Budiman, 2020; Horowitz, 2019; Silver et al., 2021). Individuals and organizations can hold a variety of reasons for valuing diversity, which constitute their *diversity rationale*. A growing body of research has examined the factors driving individual preferences for different diversity rationales and the consequences of organizations espousing them (e.g., Bowman Williams & Cox, 2022; Dover et al., 2020; Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Jansen et al., 2021; Knight & Hebl, 2005; Starck et al., 2021; Trawalter et al., 2016)[1]. This body of research distinguishes chiefly between instrumental and moral rationales. *Instrumental rationales* frame diversity as beneficial because it is a means to other ends, like exposing people to new ideas; *moral rationales* frame diversity as inherently beneficial in itself because, for example, it advances equity and justice (Moses, 2010; Starck et al., 2021)[2]. This chapter will examine which rationales people apply toward different kinds of diversity, namely, racial diversity and socioeconomic diversity, specifically within the domain of higher education.

The present work extends the theory on diversity rationales by disaggregating diversity into different types and examining people's justifications thereof. In previous research, diversity as presented is often ambiguously defined (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Starck et al., 2021; Trawalter et al., 2016). However, diversity is a broad concept that can include demographic differences like race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and sexual orientation, as

[1] This distinction can also be found surrounding justifications for other, non-diversity related, forms of corporate social responsibility (see e.g., Amengual & Apfelbaum, 2021; Ely & Thomas, 2020; Kaplan, 2020).
[2] Different researchers have used different terms to describe the same dichotomy: "enhances outcomes" narratives vs. "addresses inequality" narratives (Bowman Williams & Cox, 2022), justice rationale vs. instrumental rationale (Dover et al., 2020), business case vs. fairness case (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022), business motives vs. moral motives (Jansen et al., 2021), instrumental justification vs. compensation justification (Knight & Hebl, 2005), "diversity is good for organizations" frame vs. "diversity is fair" frame (Trawalter et al., 2016).

well as non-demographic differences like personality and learning styles (Kirby et al., 2023; Plaut et al., 2015). In so doing, this past research may have been conflating attitudes toward diversity with attitudes toward specifically *racial* diversity, since people generally believe that when diversity is ambiguously or broadly defined it focuses primarily on race (Banks, 2009; J. M. Bell & Hartmann, 2007; Dingel & Sage, 2020). By expressly delineating diversity into different types and investigating attitudes toward each type, the current research adds a more nuanced perspective to the understanding of diversity rationales. This approach mirrors the way in which people often interact with the social world, in that they encounter a specific social group and make judgements accordingly. Similarly, organizations, particularly universities, often direct their diversity and inclusion efforts toward a specific social group (see e.g., Princeton University Office of Communications, 2024). As such, understanding individuals' rationales for specific kinds of diversity can provide insight into the public's attitudes toward different social groups and the policies benefitting them.

Diversity Rationales in Society

As the debates surrounding diversity have evolved over the past few decades, so have the rationales used to justify it. During the 1960s and '70s, the push to diversify higher education—which was heavily focused on race—was justified on the grounds of promoting equity (Frymer & Skrentny, 2003). Outside of the academic realm, racial affirmative action was upheld in court cases on the basis of remedying discrimination in the past and preventing it in the future (Frymer & Skrentny, 2003). Within academia, college leaders often cited affirmative action practices as a way to increase racial equity (Harper & Reskin, 2005; Petts & Garza, 2021). However, the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* Supreme Court case in 1978 played a major role in minimizing the prevalence of this moral framing. That is, Justice Powell's deciding vote was

grounded in the idea that considering race in admissions was legitimate only as a means to improve a school's educational quality, not as a way to redress historic disadvantages or to increase present/future equity. This set the precedent for how universities came to frame racial diversity, as a means to expose "traditional" (i.e., White middle-/upper-class students) to new ideas. Since then, both diversity broadly and racial diversity specifically have primarily been framed in these instrumental terms (Berrey, 2011; Hurd & Plaut, 2018).

The discourse in these legal discussions has evidently found its way into all facets of society. Not only do American colleges and universities primarily discuss diversity in instrumental rather than moral terms (Starck et al., 2021; though see Russell Pascual et al., 2024), so do Fortune 500 companies (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022). Individuals, especially White Americans, have come to view diversity in this way as well. When researchers in one study prompted participants to provide their main reason for why they felt diversity is an important goal for organizations, the most common category was "it provides benefits/improves outcomes" (compared to "it addresses inequality", a combination of the two, "organizations should mirror population demographics", or something else altogether; Bowman Williams & Cox, 2022). While the majority of prior research documents rationales held by organizations, this study provides compelling evidence that individuals hold their own diversity rationales as well.

Why Might Race and SES Have Different Rationales

The finding that individuals frame diversity in more instrumental (vs. moral) terms when diversity is ambiguously defined fails to account for the different kinds of diversity people may be envisioning when applying these rationales. While certainly race is the most common understanding of diversity, people also consider other demographic categories in their definition (Banks, 2009). For example, in an exploratory study in a racially diverse sample of Americans

(N = 150), I found that participants most often listed race, sexual orientation, gender, and SES (or a specific instantiation of these broader categories) in response to the question "What social groups or kinds of students are American colleges talking about when they say 'diversity'?". To the extent that people disaggregate diversity into different types (Boysen, 2011; Littleford, 2013), it is not unreasonable to expect they might differentially rationalize these different types as well.

The present research focuses specifically on SES and racial diversity, given how prevalently these two diversities are juxtaposed (Bridges, 2016; Pruitt, 2015a). To my knowledge, no research has yet examined justifications for SES diversity. With the ubiquity of instrumental rationales (Berrey, 2011; Frymer & Skrentny, 2003; Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Hurd & Plaut, 2018; Starck et al., 2021), and previous research showing that instrumental rationales are associated with broadened definitions of "diversity" beyond race/ethnicity (Trawalter et al., 2016), SES diversity is likely to be highly instrumentalized. At the same time, the abundance of public discourse touting the fairness and inequality-reducing benefits of SES diversity (e.g., Cashin, 2014; Kahlenberg, 1996; Kahlenberg & Potter, 2012; McWhorter, 2022) suggests it is highly moralized as well. Thus, it is unclear whether the primary rationale applied to SES diversity is instrumental or moral. What seems clearer, though, is that SES diversity is likely moralized to a greater degree than racial diversity, and it is this distinction that the present work emphasizes. There are a number of plausible reasons for SES diversity to be more highly moralized than racial diversity, which are outlined below.

Potential Mechanisms

A major reason White Americans may moralize SES diversity more than racial diversity is because, unlike racial diversity, it allows White people to be direct beneficiaries of diversity

efforts. Perceptions of morality are inherently bounded by group membership (for reviews, see Ellemers & Van der Toorn, 2015; Leach et al., 2015). Ingroup members are perceived as more moral than outgroup members (Leach et al., 2015). Definitions of morality are built around traits and behaviors exhibited by ingroup members (e.g., Bocian et al., 2021). And policies that benefit the ingroup are deemed fairer than those that do not (Ellemers & Van der Toorn, 2015; Leach et al., 2015). Such is the case for affirmative action (Lowery et al., 2006; Mangum, 2008; Shteynberg et al., 2011). For many White people, racial-diversity efforts are perceived to entail the exclusion of other White individuals, and are therefore seen as unfair (Kaiser et al., 2022). Brown and Jacoby-Senghor (2022) found that simply framing admissions policies as "diversity policies" caused White participants to view them as harmful and unfair to White applicants even when there was evidence showing that, in actuality, more White students benefited from the policies than underrepresented racial/ethnic minority (URM) students. Evidently, for many White individuals, the association between racial diversity and racial-ingroup disadvantage is deeply ingrained. And to those who view racial-diversity efforts as unfair, SES-diversity efforts—which could theoretically encompass individuals of all races/ethnicities including White—are often seen as the more moral alternative (Kahlenberg, 1996).

Another reason White Americans may moralize SES diversity more than racial diversity is the perception that first-generation and/or low-income (FLI) students have experienced more hardship than URM students. Previous research has found that those who overcome (non-self-inflicted) hardships are perceived in a moral light (Pérez & Molpeceres, 2018; Schaumberg & Mullen, 2017). And people express stronger support for programs like affirmative action the more they believe the intended beneficiaries have faced hardships like discrimination (Son Hing et al., 2002). But White individuals may view URM students as not facing as many hardships as

FLI students, at least on account of race. There is a general perception today, especially among White individuals, that society is "post-racial" (Kraus et al., 2022). White Americans have a narrower definition of racism than Black Americans, one that generally only encompasses individual experiences of overt racism (E. R. Carter & Murphy, 2015). Structural forms of racism, like the persistent racial disparities in health outcomes, political enfranchisement, and cultural representation (see e.g., Collins et al., 2007; Martinez et al., 2021; Reny & Bhojwani, 2014), however, are overlooked. Moreover, economic disadvantage is seen as the central cause of any racial disadvantages that do remain (for a discussion, see Bridges, 2018). And even then, White individuals generally underestimate the size of Black-White economic disparities (Davidai & Walker, 2022; Kraus et al., 2019), thereby furthering the misconception of post-racialism. Thus, the way SES-diversity efforts are viewed as targeting "real" hardship better than racial-diversity efforts (see e.g., Kahlenberg & Potter, 2012) is likely an important component of their perceived morality.

Building on this reasoning, White Americans may moralize SES diversity because its intended beneficiaries are seen as more competent than racial diversity's intended beneficiaries. With its deep tradition of "Protestant work ethic" values, American culture views meritorious traits like industriousness in a moral light and worthy of reward (Amos et al., 2019; Celniker et al., 2022; Uhlmann et al., 2011). In fact, Americans are more likely to support affirmative action policies when the targeted students are described as "high-achieving" compared to when there is no such description (E. Bell, 2021). Importantly, meritorious traits are often attributed to those perceived to have overcome obstacles or faced an uphill climb (Fallon, 1996; Vandello et al., 2007). If society is indeed post-racial, then a lack of access to socioeconomic resources is likely deemed a more legitimate obstacle than being a URM student. It follows then that FLI students

have climbed a steeper hill, and thus, their college-readiness is more diagnostic of their competence than URM students'. On top of that, previous research has shown that when inequality seems low (vs. high), people are more likely to attribute wealth and poverty to internal factors (Davidai, 2018). Consequently, the assumption that racial inequality is low today (Davidai & Walker, 2022; Kraus et al., 2019) might cause people to view Black or Latinx students' relative underrepresentation in higher education (Cahalan et al., 2021) as a reflection of their internal failings.[3] Taken together, whether evaluating individual students or the groups at large, White Americans may perceive URM students to be less competent than low-SES students, and thus less worthy of moral regard.

Finally, White individuals may moralize SES diversity more because, compared to racial diversity, it is perceived as less of a *realistic threat*—a potential harm to resources for themselves or their racial ingroup (Stephan et al., 2015). White Americans increasingly see themselves as disadvantaged in society (Norton & Sommers, 2011), and feelings of relative deprivation are linked to opposition to race-based affirmative action (Baker, 2019; Shteynberg et al., 2011). This is evident in the way arguments against race-based policies often make "reverse discrimination" claims; qualified White students are supposedly being denied access to educational opportunities (to which they feel entitled, see e.g., Warikoo, 2019) on account of their race (J. S. Carter et al., 2019). Furthermore, feelings of disadvantage or deprivation have been shown to evoke *zero-sum beliefs* (Ongis & Davidai, 2022; Wilkins et al., 2015), the notion that an outgroup's gain necessarily entails ingroup losses. Thus, the more URM students gain (i.e., from racial-diversity policies) the less White students may feel they have (Iyer, 2022). In

[3] Meanwhile, because economic inequality remains, the relative underrepresentation of low-SES students (Cahalan et al., 2021) is more easily attributed to external, structural factors that might constrain students' internal talents. This might encourage support for external intervention (e.g., in the form of SES-diversity policies) that would allow students to overcome these external barriers.

turn, such zero-sum beliefs activate motivations to weaken the outgroup's ability to compete in society and/or strengthen the ingroup's ability to compete (Wilkins et al., 2015); this could be accomplished via diversity policies that extend resources to White students while deemphasizing URM students. Since there seems to be a moral motive to protect one's group from realistic threats (Brambilla et al., 2013; Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013), the moralization of SES-diversity policies may serve this purpose by mitigating the supposed harm caused by racial-diversity policies.

In sum, extant research on attitudes toward diversity policies and the psychology of moral attitudes suggest a number of reasons White Americans may moralize SES diversity more strongly than racial diversity. First, compared to racial diversity, SES diversity may be seen as benefiting White students to a greater extent. Second, the beneficiaries of SES (vs. racial) diversity may be perceived as having faced more hardship. Third, they may also be perceived as being more competent. And finally, SES diversity is likely thought to entail less realistic threat.

Note, while the current research is not explicitly focused on this, I assume that URM individuals do not moralize SES diversity more strongly than racial diversity. For URM individuals, both SES and racial diversity can benefit their racial ingroup, which in turn likely reduces feelings of threat. Moreover, their personal experiences with racism in various forms may reduce differential perceptions of hardship, and thereby differential perceptions of competence as well.

Chapter Overview

The following studies investigate the extent to which White Americans moralize SES diversity relative to racial diversity, and whether this is driven by the mechanisms laid out above. Studies 1.1a-c synthesize the results of three separate studies examining the degree to which

Americans apply moral and instrumental rationales toward SES and racial diversity, in order to test the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 1 (H1)*: White Americans endorse moral rationales for SES diversity more than they do for racial diversity.

Given the focus on attitudes toward *SES* diversity, exploratory analyses were also run to examine if this effect differs as a function of an individual's own SES, though no formal hypothesis were made regarding whether or how participant SES moderates the effect. Additionally, based on extant work documenting that attitudes toward SES versus racial diversity differ between liberals and conservatives (E. Bell, 2021; Carlson & Bell, 2021), additional exploratory analyses were run to examine whether the effect differs as a function of political orientation. Again, no formal hypotheses were made regarding this effect.

Study 1.2 aggregates two additional studies to replicate *H1*, as well as to examine the mediating role of the mechanisms outlined above, in order to test the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 2 (H2)*: The stronger endorsement of moral rationales for SES (vs. racial) diversity is driven in part by the perception that, compared to racial diversity, its beneficiaries a) are more likely to be White, b) have faced more hardship, c) are more competent, and/or d) pose less threat.

Studies 1.1a-c

Studies 1.1a-c were meant to establish the degree to which White Americans apply moral and instrumental rationales toward SES and racial diversity. Three separate studies were conducted: first a pilot study, then a direct replication, and finally a replication with an extension to Black participants. In each study, participants rated their agreement with various moral and instrumental reasons to pursue SES and racial diversity. Gender diversity was also included as a

comparison condition. All studies used the same basic procedure, with only minor adjustments or exploratory measures included. The design, hypotheses, and analysis plans of Studies 1.1b and c were preregistered, and are available on the Open Science Framework (OSF; https://osf.io/zm25t and https://osf.io/fcs8p).

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited via the online survey platform Prolific. Based on results from Study 1.1a (which was initially run as a pilot), a simulation-based power analysis indicated needing 130 participants to detect an interaction between diversity rationale and diversity type with 80% power. Given my interest in running more complex models for exploratory purposes, I sought to recruit 200 participants per sample. All three studies used the same eligibility criteria: participants had to be located in the United States, be monoracial, and not have participated in the previous studies (not applicable for Study 1.1a). Data were removed from participants who indicated responding randomly, failed an attention check, or spent more than 35 minutes on the study (which was determined in Study 1.1a to be 3 *SD* greater than the mean completion time). Finally, the data were screened for suspicious participants—based on nonsensical open-ended responses or zero response variability—due to concerns regarding responses on online platforms coming from untrustworthy sources (Moss & Litman, 2018). The pattern of results is nearly identical with all participants included. The full demographic characteristics of all four final samples are reported in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

Demographic Characteristics of Study 1.1 Samples by Individual Study

Variable	Study 1.1a		Study 1.1b		Study 1.1c (White)		Study 1.1c (Black)	
Initial sample size	198		204		201		201	
Participants removed	23		23		20		34	
Final sample size	175		181		181		167	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender								
Cisgender men	94	53.71	90	49.72	90	49.72	77	46.11
Cisgender women	75	42.86	91	50.28	90	49.72	90	53.89
Non-binary/other	6	3.43	0	0.00	1	0.56	0	0.00
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Age	37.29	12.39	33.50	10.16	34.63	12.42	34.74	11.92
Education	4.55	1.57	4.29	1.47	3.99	1.39	4.12	1.36
Household income	6.31	3.57	6.86	3.36	5.80	3.15	6.16	3.25
Subjective social status	5.43	1.85	5.23	1.62	5.04	1.73	4.92	1.73
Political ideology	3.71	2.37	3.86	2.01	3.72	2.19	3.88	1.79

Note: Education is out of 7, household income is out of 12, subjective social status is out of 10, and political ideology is out of 9.

Procedure

Participants were recruited once in July 2021 and twice in September 2021. In Study 1.1c, Black Americans were also sampled in order to examine differences between White and Black Americans on the outcomes of interest. After consenting and confirming their eligibility, participants were first asked to consider "a university that has recently decided to focus on diversifying the student body along various dimensions." Participants then read the following:

"One dimension along which the university wants to diversify is [**socioeconomic status** / **race/ethnicity** / **gender**]. Specifically, it has made a commitment to focus on the number of [**first-generation and low-income students** / **ethnic minority students** / **women**] among its student body" (the bolded font was present in the original text). Each participant read about all three dimensions, presented in randomized order. Note, a definition for "first-generation students" was provided on the page.

After reading this brief text introducing the specific dimension of diversity at hand, participants were asked how much they agree with the university's decision, and then wrote up to five reasons why they felt the university should be committed to that diversity type in question. Next, participants were presented with a list of ten reasons, in randomized order, and indicated their agreement with each one. Importantly, each reason reflected either an instrumental rationale or a moral rationale. Finally, participants answered a set of demographic questions.

Measures

Moral Endorsement. The endorsement of moral rationales was measured using participants' average agreement to the following five reasons: "All students should have access to a university education", "It is the fair and equitable thing to do", "It would help redress both past and present inequalities in society", "It would ensure that no group is excluded or disadvantaged", and "It would help ensure that the benefits of education are more evenly distributed throughout society" (α_{avg} = .91). Participants indicated their endorsement on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Instrumental Endorsement. The endorsement of instrumental rationales was measured using participants' average agreement to the following five reasons: "Their presence on campus will enrich all students' educational experience", "Their presence on campus will prepare

students for the 'real' world", "The perspectives they would bring will fuel innovation and creativity", "Other students could learn from their perspectives and experiences", and "Society is becoming more diverse and globalized, and students need to learn to interact with different kinds of people" (α_{avg} = .92). Participants indicated their endorsement on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Demographics. A number of demographic measures were collected from participants, including educational attainment (1 = *Less than high school*, 2 = *High-school graduate*, 3 = *Some college but no degree*, 4 = *Associate's degree*, 5 = *Bachelor's degree*, 6 = *Master's degree*, and 7 = *Doctorate or professional degree*), household income (1-10 = $10,000 increments up to $99,999; 11 = *$100,000 - $149,999*; 12 = *More than $150,000*), and subjective social status (measured using the 10-point MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status; Adler et al., 2000). In addition, participants' political orientation was measured by averaging responses to two items asking them to place themselves on a scale from 1 = *Extremely liberal* to 9 = *Extremely conservative*, and from 1 = *Strong Democrat* to 9 = *Strong Republican* (α = .87).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

To start, a confirmatory factor analysis was run to ensure the individual items fit their intended rationale. These analyses were conducted in R (version 4.2.2; R Core Team, 2022) using the cfa function of the package lavaan (Rosseel, 2012) with the data from the four samples combined. The analyses were run both with the data separated by diversity type (i.e., SES, race, and gender) and with the data combined across diversity type. The pattern of results was nearly identical across the four analyses, and there was evidence of metric invariance by diversity type. Thus, the aggregated results are presented below.

The two-factor model fit the data well (for a review of the indices used below, see Hu & Bentler, 1999), $\chi^2(34) = 276.784$, $p < .001$. Good model fit was further suggested by a wide variety of fit indices: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .986; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = .018; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .058, 90% CI [.052, .065]. In addition, the factor loadings for the instrument rationale (0.751-0.880) and the moral rationale (0.680-0.896) were all large and statistically reliable (all *p*s < .001). However, since the covariance between the two factors was high and statistically significant (*cov* = .777, $p < .001$), the two-factor model was compared against a one-factor model. Fit indices for the one-factor model were somewhat unsatisfactory, $\chi^2(35) = 1810.012$, $p < .001$, CFI = .898, SRMR = .048, RMSEA = .155, 90% CI [.149, .161]. Moreover, the two-factor model fit the data significantly better than the one-factor model, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 246.82$, $p < .001$. Thus, there is strong evidence that the items represent distinct, coherent constructs.

Rationale Endorsement

To test the endorsement of moral versus instrumental rationales for each policy, a 3 (diversity type: SES, race, gender) X 2 (rationale: moral, instrumental) mixed-effects ANOVA was run separately for each sample. The models were run using the lmer function of the R package lme4 (Bates et al., 2015). To account for the repeated-measures nature of the design, a per-participant random intercept and random slopes for diversity type and rationale were included. The presentation order of SES versus race (i.e., whether SES was seen before or after race) was included as a covariate, given that participants may have interpreted SES diversity as meaning racial diversity if it was seen before the racial-diversity condition, and vice versa. This variable was never significant, and thus is not presented in the results. Sum-to-zero contrasts were used for categorical variables. Significant effects were determined by *p*-values based on

Type 3 tests using Kenward-Roger approximation for degrees of freedom, as implemented in the Anova function of the package car (Fox & Weisberg, 2019). The interaction was examined via post-hoc pairwise comparisons using the emmeans function with Tukey adjustments for multiple comparisons (Lenth et al., 2021).

Results from the four models are presented in Table 1.2. Across all four samples, there was a consistent main effect of diversity type, all *p*s < .018. The main effect of rationale was only significant in one study, and non-significant in the others. The main effects were, however, always qualified by the predicted interaction between diversity type and rationale, all *p*s < .002.

H1 was that White participants would endorse moral reasons for SES diversity more than for racial diversity. When breaking down the diversity type X rationale interaction via pairwise comparisons, this is exactly the pattern found in all three White samples, all *t*s > 2.354, *p*s < .050. Black participants, however, endorsed moral reasons to the same degree for SES diversity and racial diversity, $t(419) = 0.000$, p = .999.

Though no formal hypotheses were made regarding the other comparisons, there was suggestive though inconsistent evidence that participants endorsed instrumental reasons for racial diversity more than for SES diversity, see Table 1.2. An additional noteworthy finding is that SES diversity was consistently moralized more than gender diversity in all four samples, all *t*s > 2.656, *p*s < .023, but only Black participants moralized racial diversity more than gender diversity, $t(288) = 2.823$, $p = .014$; White participants moralized racial and gender diversity to the same degree, all *t*s < 1.866, *p*s > .150. Pairwise comparisons decomposing the diversity type X rationale interaction the other way (i.e., examining the difference between moral and instrumental endorsement within each diversity type) are presented in Appendix A.

Table 1.2

Test-statistics, Means (SDs), and Mean Comparisons of Rationale Endorsement, Studies 1.1a-c

	F-statistics (*df*)		
Sample	Diversity type	Rationale	Diversity type X Rationale
1.1a	4.096*	2.519	7.152***
	(2, 173)	(1, 174)	(2, 348)
1.1b	6.697**	4.722*	17.259***
	(2, 179)	(1, 180)	(2, 360)
1.1c (White)	5.277 **	0.035	14.779 ***
	(2, 179)	(1, 180)	(2, 360)
1.1c (Black)	13.133***	1.273	6.614**
	(2, 165)	(1, 166)	(2, 332)

	Means (*SD*s)					
	Moral			Instrumental		
Sample	SES	Race	Gender	SES	Race	Gender
1.1a	5.84^{a}	5.67^{b}	5.65^{b}	5.69^{ab}	5.71^{a}	5.58^{b}
	(1.21)	(1.47)	(1.44)	(1.21)	(1.33)	(1.38)
1.1b	5.88^{a}	5.76^{b}	5.67^{b}	5.57^{a}	5.78^{b}	5.58^{a}
	(1.25)	(1.30)	(1.31)	(1.20)	(1.16)	(1.20)
1.1c (White)	5.94^{a}	5.74^{b}	5.67^{b}	$5.74^{\underline{a}}$	$5.85^{\underline{b}}$	$5.73^{\underline{a}}$
	(1.17)	(1.39)	(1.37)	(1.16)	(1.18)	(1.23)
1.1c (Black)	6.25^{a}	6.25^{a}	6.10^{b}	6.09^{a}	6.30^{b}	6.04^{a}
	(0.94)	(1.04)	(1.21)	(1.00)	(0.82)	(1.11)

Note. Test statistics account for effect of presentation order as a covariate. Superscript letters abutting mean values convey the results of post-hoc pairwise comparisons between diversity types of the same rationale. Means with different superscript letters within the same rationale are statistically different from another at the level of .05. Underlined superscripts indicate a marginally significant difference.
***$p < .001$. **$p < .01$. *$p < .05$.

In an exploratory analysis on the aggregated data from Study 1.1c, a model examining the diversity type X rationale X participant race three-way interaction yielded a non-significant three-way interaction, $F(2, 692) = 1.885$, $p = .153$. Despite its non-significance, the interaction was still unpacked for exploratory purposes. This revealed that across all diversity types and rationales, Black participants endorsed the rationales more highly than White participants, all *t*s > 2.256, *p*s $< .025$.

Exploratory Moderation

Given the focus on SES diversity in the present research, exploratory analyses investigated whether the primary effect of interest differs as a function of an individual's own SES. That is, do low-SES White Americans show a greater SES/race moralization difference than high-SES White Americans? To that end, the data from the White participants across Studies 1.1a-c were aggregated, and the three proxies for participant SES (educational attainment, household income, and subjective social status) were standardized within each sample prior to aggregation. The same mixed-effects ANOVA described above was run, this time with a three-way interaction that included participant SES. A random intercept per participant nested within sample was also included. The basic pattern of results was fairly consistent across the three proxies for SES, so only results for subjective social status are presented below.

The results for the lower-order terms mirrored those from the primary analysis reported above. Meanwhile, the diversity type X rationale X participant SES interaction was marginally significant, $F(2, 1070) = 2.781$, $p = .062$. The interaction was then examined using values that were 1 *SD* below and above the mean (i.e., approximately 3.5 and 7.0) on the ladder measure. These analyses revealed that both lower-SES, $t(959) = 4.825$, $p < .001$, and higher-SES participants, $t(954) = 2.657$, $p = .008$, endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity more than for racial diversity. Moreover, these two effects were not statistically different from one another, $p = .126$. Examining an alternate decomposition of the marginally significant three-way interaction also revealed that low- and high-SES participants did not differ in terms of their endorsement of the rationales for any of the diversity types, all ps > .393. In short, the greater moral endorsement

of SES diversity relative to racial diversity among White Americans holds across the social-class spectrum.

An additional exploratory analysis investigated whether the primary effect of interest differs as a function of an individual's political orientation. Data from the White participants across Studies 1.1a-c were again aggregated, and political orientation was centered at the sample mean. The same mixed-effects ANOVA described above was run, this time with a three-way interaction that included political orientation.

Results revealed that all of the lower-order terms were significant, all *p*s < .029, but the diversity type X rationale X political orientation interaction was not significant, $F(2, 1070) = 1.568$, $p = .209$. For exploratory purposes, the interaction was further examined at 2.25 and 6.75 (i.e., the 25th and 75th percentiles) on the 9-point political-orientation scale. Given the non-significant three-way interaction, the following results should be interpreted with caution. Results revealed that both liberal, $t(962) = 2.163$, $p = .031$, and conservative participants, $t(962) = 6.154$, $p < .001$, endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity more than for racial diversity. However, these two effects were statistically different from one another, $b = 0.129$, $SE = .041$, $t(962) = 3.131$, $p = .002$, indicating that conservatives more strongly moralized SES diversity over racial diversity than did liberals. It should be noted that when the three-way interaction was instead examined at 1 *SD* below and above the mean on the political-orientation scale (i.e., 1.6 and 6.0), the effect disappears among the liberal participants, $t(962) = 1.531$, $p = .126$. In other words, as conservatism increases, White Americans' endorsement of moral reasons for SES diversity versus racial diversity increases as well; conservatives and moderate liberals show the effect, but strong liberals do not. Notably, examining the effect of political orientation for each diversity type indicated that as participants reported higher conservatism, their endorsement of

both rationales decreased, all *p*s < .001. In other words, White liberals endorse any reason for diversity more so than White conservatives.

Discussion

The results from Studies 1.1a-c show that, in line with *H1*, White Americans endorse moral reasons for SES diversity significantly more than for racial diversity. The consistent appearance of this finding across three separate studies speaks to the robustness of this effect. Moreover, the effect seems driven by the particularly high endorsement of moral reasons for SES diversity compared to racial and gender diversity. In contrast, Black Americans do not differ in the degree to which they moralize SES diversity and racial diversity, in that both are equally high (relative both to the endorsement of moral rationales for gender diversity and to White Americans' endorsement of moral rationales). Meanwhile, an exploratory moderation by participant SES within the White samples indicated the effect holds at both low and high ends of participant SES. Finally, an exploratory moderation by political orientation within the White samples suggested that both moderate liberals and conservatives show the effect, but extreme liberals do not.

Study 1.2

With consistent evidence that White Americans moralize SES diversity more than racial diversity, Study 1.2 sought to examine potential mediators underlying this effect. In other words, which perceptions of SES diversity and its supposed beneficiaries are driving the relatively higher endorsement of moral rationales toward SES (vs. racial) diversity? Based on the mechanisms identified above, Study 1.2 explored how perceptions of White-student prioritization, past hardship, competence, and realistic threat affect endorsement of moral rationales. There were no expectations about which of these effects would exert the strongest

influence; rather, it was broadly hypothesized that at least one of them would underly the moralization difference documented above.

In Study 1.2, the gender-diversity condition was dropped based on repeated comments from participants that gender diversity in higher education was not of concern anymore. Thus, the comparison condition was replaced with one that was not focused on supporting the entrance of a specific demographic group, but rather on increasing the enrollment of all students. The idea of increasing enrollment—particularly at elite universities—arises in debates surrounding diversity in higher education as a way to reduce selectivity and expand opportunity (see e.g., Kirp, 2021; Selingo, 2021). Moreover, given that calling for an increase in total enrollment is relatively vague, this would allow participants to fill in their own interpretations regarding which kinds of students this would benefit.

The data presented below come from two separate studies. The study procedure and the items assessing the key variables of interest (rationale endorsement and potential mediators) were identical in both, but there were slight differences in the stimuli used and the order in which question blocks were presented. The second of these two studies also fixed a coding error in the first one wherein the items were not fully randomized within blocks. For the purposes of statistical power and ease of comprehension, the data were combined; aggregated results are presented below. The results from both individual studies replicate the results reported here, and can be found in Appendix B. The first study was not preregistered, but the design, hypotheses, and analysis plan of the second study were preregistered and can be found on OSF (https://osf.io/d4wmq).[4]

[4] Based on initial reader feedback on how to increase the interpretability of the results, the analyses reported in the text deviate from those initially preregistered.

Method

Participants

A simulation-based power analysis using aggregated data from the White participants in Studies 1.1a-c estimated a sample of around 180 participants to achieve 80% power. Given, however, that the study materials were changed and new items were added with the intention of conducting mediation analyses, the recruitment goal was increased to 550 participants to reduce the likelihood of being underpowered. This was also meant to preserve the option of conducting between-subjects exploratory analyses using each participant's first condition with approximately 180 participants per condition, to supplement the within-subjects analyses. Participants were again recruited from Prolific using the same eligibility criteria as described in Studies 1.1a-c, and were removed also following the same practices as in Study 1.1. In addition, in Study 1.2b, a recall check was included in each condition to ensure participants understood the policy they had just read. If participants answered the recall check incorrectly for a particular diversity type, that case was removed. Five participants answered all three recall checks wrong and were thus removed from the sample entirely. The pattern of results is nearly identical with all participants included. See Table 1.3 for full demographic characteristics.

Table 1.3

Demographic Characteristics of Study 1.2 Samples by Individual Study

Variable	Study 1.2a		Study 1.2b	
Initial sample size	550		552	
Participants removed	33		57	
Final sample size	517		495	
	n	%	*n*	%
Gender				
Cisgender men	154	29.79	238	48.08
Cisgender women	340	65.76	243	49.09
Non-binary/other	22	4.26	13	2.63
NA	1	0.19	1	0.20
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Age	36.22	14.00	40.04	14.74
Education	4.27	1.39	4.40	1.42
Household income	6.80	2.71	6.73	2.82
Subjective social status	5.38	1.71	5.33	1.84
Political ideology	2.80	1.72	3.11	1.79

Note: Education is out of 7, household income is out of 12, subjective social status is out of 10, and political ideology is out of 7.

Procedure

White Americans were recruited from Prolific in December 2021 and February 2022. After consenting, participants were asked to consider different university policies and the students that might benefit therefrom. Specifically, participants were presented with three policies in counterbalanced order described as increasing either SES diversity, racial/ethnic diversity, or total enrollment. In the first study, the stimuli for the two diversity conditions read as follows:

> Many colleges and universities in the US are dedicated to **diversifying their student bodies with regard to** [**socioeconomic status** / **race/ethnicity**]. Specifically, many schools are adopting efforts to **increase the number of** [**first-generation and/or low-income** / **racial/ethnic minority**] **students that are enrolled**. Please imagine the kinds of students that these efforts are geared toward.

The stimuli for the total-enrollment condition read as follows:

> Many colleges and universities in the US are dedicated to **increasing the size of their student bodies**. Specifically, many schools are adopting efforts to **increase the number of undergraduate students that are enrolled**. Please imagine the kinds of students that these efforts are geared toward.

In the second study, the statements were modified to reduce the likelihood that participants were interpreting SES diversity as implying racial diversity, and vice versa. Thus, the statements for the two diversity conditions delineated more clearly that each policy was only focused on the single dimension in question and not any others. The statement was further changed such that it was described as being delivered by a university president:

> "Many colleges and universities in the US are dedicated to diversifying their student bodies. Some of the dimensions along which other schools are trying to diversify include [race and ethnicity / socioeconomic status], gender, geographic background, national origin, and religion. Our school has decided to focus on [socioeconomic status / race and ethnicity], by **increasing the number of** [**first-generation and low-income** / **racial and ethnic minority**] **students that are enrolled**." – University President

The stimuli for the total-enrollment condition read as follows:

> "Many colleges and universities in the US are dedicated to increasing the size of their student bodies. Our school has decided to follow suit, by focusing on **increasing the overall number of undergraduate students that are enrolled**." – University President

Note, the bolded font was present in the original text. After reading each statement, participants were asked to write about the kinds of students they had imagined as a way to increase the salience of the policy and its impacts. Participants then indicated how much they supported the diversity efforts about which they read, and then proceeded to answer a series of questions on their perceptions of the diversity type at hand. These questions assessed moral and instrumental endorsement, as well as the proposed mechanisms. Finally, participants answered a set of demographic questions.

Measures

Rationale Endorsement. The key dependent variables assessed the extent to which participants endorsed moral versus instrumental rationales for each policy. Given the new mediators included, the number of items used to capture rationale endorsement were reduced, so as to not substantially increase the overall study completion time. Two questions assessed participants' endorsement of moral rationales for the policy: "To what extent is supporting these students a moral obligation?" and "To what extent is supporting these students the fair and equitable thing to do?" (α_{avg} = .87). Two questions assessed participants' endorsement of instrumental rationales: "How much would these students expand their classmates' perspectives?" and "How much would the presence of these students on campus enrich all students' educational experience?" (α_{avg} = .94). All items were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *A great deal*).

White-Student Prioritization. To assess the extent to which participants felt each policy would differentially prioritize students of different races, participants were asked "How much would ___ students be prioritized at this school as a result of these efforts?" There was a separate item for White, Black, Asian, and Latinx. The current analysis looked specifically at responses to the question about prioritization of White students. Items were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all prioritized*, 7 = *Prioritized a great deal*).

Hardship. The extent to which participants perceived the beneficiaries of a given policy as having experienced hardship in their lives was assessed with the following two items: "How much hardship do you think these students have had to overcome?" and "How many societal challenges have these students faced?" (α_{avg} = .94). Items were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = *None at all*, 7 = *A great deal*).

Competence. The extent to which participants perceived the beneficiaries of a given policy as being smart and hard-working was assessed with the following two items: "How intelligent/smart do you think these students are?" and "How hard-working/industrious do you think these students are?" (α_{avg} = .90). Items were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Extremely*).

Realistic Threat. The extent to which participants perceived the beneficiaries of a given policy as taking resources away from others was assessed with the following three items: "To what extent do you think…" "…these efforts would come at the expense of resources for you?", "…these efforts come at the expense of other students applying to or attending this university?", "…students benefitting from these efforts are 'cutting the line'?" (α_{avg} = .85). Items were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *A great deal*).

Demographics. The same demographic measures as in Studies 1.1a-c were collected, with some minor changes.

Results

Rationale Endorsement

To first test the endorsement of moral versus instrumental rationales for each policy, a 3 (policy type: SES diversity, racial diversity, total enrollment) X 2 (rationale: moral, instrumental) mixed-effects ANOVA was run, with all the same specifications described in Studies 1.1a-c. The one modification was the addition of a random intercept per participant nested within study.

Results mirrored those from Studies 1.1a-c, confirming the main effect of interest. There were significant main effects of policy type, $F(2, 971.80) = 265.413$, $p < .001$, and of rationale, $F(1, 1005.21) = 5.565$, $p = .019$, which were qualified by the expected policy type X rationale interaction, $F(2, 1943.54) = 43.656$, $p < .001$.

Unpacking the interaction revealed the predicted difference between SES diversity (M = 5.42, SD = 1.55) and racial diversity (M = 5.10, SD = 1.83) with regard to moral endorsement, $t(1701) = 8.693$, $p < .001$. While of less theoretical interest, there was no difference in the endorsement of instrumental rationales between SES diversity (M = 5.30, SD = 1.57) and racial diversity (M = 5.34, SD = 1.68), $p = .476$. Finally, participants endorsed both moral and instrumental rationales for both diversity conditions more than for the total-enrollment condition, all ps < .001. Pairwise comparisons examining the condition X rationale interaction the other way (i.e., examining the difference between moral and instrumental endorsement within each policy type) are presented in Appendix A.

Mechanisms of Moralization

To first verify the factor structure of the items assessing the proposed mechanisms, a confirmatory factor analysis was run on the aggregated data. After examining various configurations of the items (e.g., combining the hardship and competence items into a single factor given their relatedness), the four-factor structure was found to fit the data best, as indicated by a wide variety of fit indices: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .990; Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = .024; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .058, 90% CI [.051, .067].

To test the mechanisms potentially underlying the moralization of SES diversity relative to racial diversity, the four theoretical variables (i.e., prioritization of White students, hardship, competence, and threat) were entered as simultaneous indirect effects into a mediation model. All analyses were conducted in lavaan (Rosseel, 2012). Because the primary theoretical interest is the moral endorsement of SES diversity compared to racial diversity, the predictor examined the contrast between SES diversity (coded as 1) and racial diversity (coded as 0), and the total-

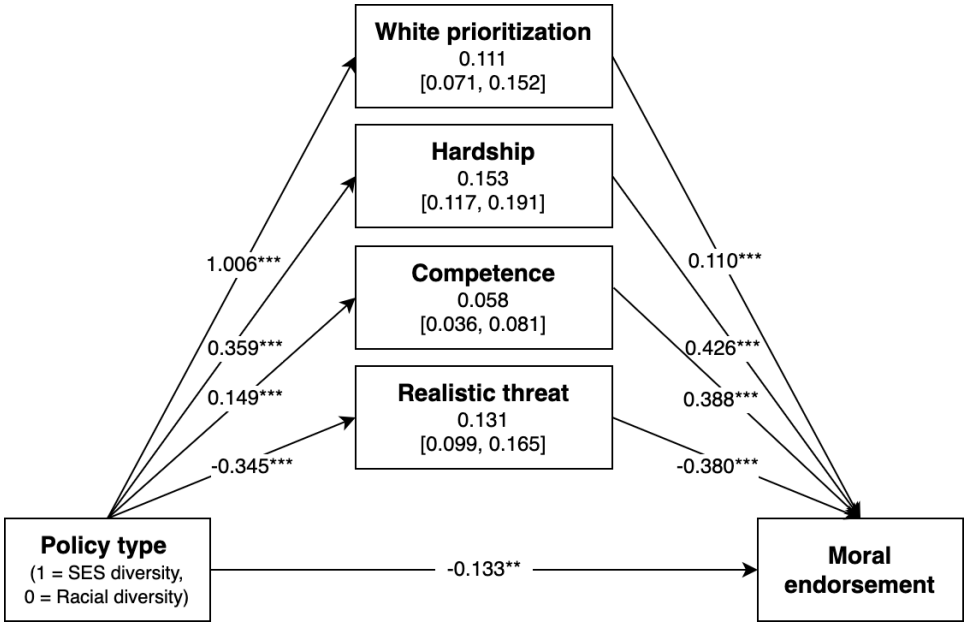
enrollment condition was dropped from the analysis. Monte Carlo 95% confidence intervals[5] were used from the package semTools (Jorgensen et al., 2022) based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples, and the standard errors were clustered at the participant level. The presentation order of SES diversity versus racial diversity was also included as a control variable at all paths in the mediation analysis.[6]

Results are shown in Figure 1.1. As expected, SES diversity was associated with greater perceived White-student prioritization (SES: $M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.43$; race: $M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.50$) hardship (SES: $M = 5.73$, $SD = 1.22$; race: $M = 5.37$, $SD = 1.35$), and competence (SES: $M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.06$; race: $M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.18$), and with lower perceived realistic threat (SES: $M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.47$; race: $M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.69$), compared to racial diversity, all ps $< .001$. In turn, White-student prioritization, hardship, and competence were all associated with greater endorsement of the moral rationale, while realistic threat was associated with weaker endorsement, all ps $< .001$. As such, the indirect effects of all four variables were significant, as indicated by none of the confidence intervals containing zero.

[5] This approach was changed from the preregistration here and for all following mediation analyses after learning about the advantages of Monte Carlo confidence intervals (Preacher & Selig, 2012).
[6] The pattern of results is identical when controlling for instrumental endorsement at the *c*-path.

Figure 1.1

Mediation Analysis Testing Indirect Effects from Study 1.2



Note. Models show the unstandardized coefficients. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$.

Discussion

Study 1.2 expanded upon the earlier finding that White Americans endorse moral rationales for SES diversity more than for racial diversity by examining potential mechanisms underlying this effect. Specifically, participants felt the beneficiaries of SES- (vs. racial-) diversity efforts were more likely to be White, had experienced more hardship, and were more competent, and SES-diversity efforts themselves posed less realistic threat than racial-diversity efforts. Each of these four mechanisms independently explained some portion of the difference in moralization between SES and racial diversity. As a result, accounting for these four variables actually reversed the sign of the direct effect compared to the total effect. This suggests that, were it not for these perceptions, White Americans might actually moralize racial diversity more than SES diversity.

General Discussion

This chapter investigated the diversity rationales White Americans apply to SES versus racial diversity with regard to higher education. In support of the first hypothesis, across all studies, White participants consistently endorsed moral rationales for SES diversity more than for racial diversity. This effect was not found among Black participants, though it was found among both low- and high-SES White participants. This suggests the greater moral endorsement of SES diversity relative to racial diversity might be tied to participants' race more so than their SES. In exploratory analysis, it was also found that the difference in endorsing moral rationales for SES diversity relative to racial diversity increases as participants get more conservative; only those at the most liberal end of the political-orientation spectrum endorsed moral rationales to the same degree for SES diversity and racial diversity. Finally, this chapter identified mechanisms that likely shape the degree to which the moral rationale is applied, namely, perceptions of how much the policy would benefit White students, how much hardship the intended beneficiaries have faced, how competent the beneficiaries are, and how much realistic threat the policy poses. The analyses indicated that each of the four proposed mechanisms independently explained some portion of the difference in moralization between SES and racial diversity.

One potential question raised by the results presented above is whether moral-rationale endorsement stems purely from a post-hoc justification of which diversity types participants support. In every study in this chapter, participants were always asked first how much they supported the diversity efforts in question, and only then indicated their rationale endorsement. Previous research has found that people are motivated to align their moral attitudes with their existing social beliefs (Hadarics & Kende, 2021). Thus, it is plausible that participants first anchored on how much they liked a specific policy and then applied moral arguments

accordingly. However, to address this concern, an exploratory study was run wherein participants were never asked whether they supported the diversity type in question (see Appendix C). This study revealed that, even without being prompted to consider whether or how much they supported each diversity type, participants still moralized SES diversity more than racial diversity. While it is possible that considering support first does strengthen moral endorsement, this exploratory study suggests moral endorsement is still independent of policy support.

Implications

A major contribution of this research is the investigation into how SES diversity in higher education is perceived by members of the public. To my knowledge, the majority of extant empirical research on perceptions of SES diversity focuses on perceptions of and attitudes toward low-SES *individuals* broadly, rather than specific sub-types like students (e.g., Durante & Fiske, 2017; Fiske et al., 2002; Kunstman et al., 2016; Lindqvist et al., 2017; Loughnan et al., 2014; Oh et al., 2020). While the extant research generally documents negative perceptions of low-SES individuals, the present research found that low-SES students might actually be perceived in a more positive light. Perhaps the positive evaluation of FLI students' competence found here stems from the indication that, by pursuing higher education, low-SES students are working hard to improve their station in life. Ess and Burke (2022), for example, found that low-SES candidates for a job in business or the tech industry (both of which would likely require postsecondary education) are actually judged more positively than high-SES candidates, and also more positively than other more prototypical exemplars of low-income people (see also Koo et al., 2022). Thus, it seems that signals of high competence or work ethic, such as being on track for college, override the negative stereotypes typically ascribed to low-SES individuals.

Similarly, the research presented in this chapter highlights perceptions toward SES diversity in higher education *in relation to racial diversity*. While some theoretical work has been dedicated to this topic (e.g., Harris, 2017; Pruitt, 2015a, 2015b), there has not been much empirical research conducted thereon (though see E. Bell, 2021; Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Feldman & Huddy, 2005; Kunstman et al., 2016). Past research has typically only investigated SES diversity in isolation, generally comparing perceptions of low-SES individuals to those of high-SES individuals (e.g., Durante & Fiske, 2017; Fiske et al., 2002; Lindqvist et al., 2017; Oh et al., 2020). However, given how frequently public discourse paints diversity efforts as a zero-sum game between SES diversity and racial diversity (e.g., Kahlenberg & Potter, 2012; McWhorter, 2022), it is high time that empirical research unpack the content of people's perceptions regarding the two. The present research does this both in terms of the diversity rationales applied thereto, as well as other relevant perceptions that underlie differences in rationales applied. Notably, in exploratory analysis not reported here that used data from only the first condition participants encountered—that is, absent any comparison to other diversity types—the differences between SES and racial diversity regarding rationale endorsement and the other perceptions were found to be muted or altogether non-significant. By directly comparing SES diversity and racial diversity, participants are likely better able to decouple targets' race from their SES, which are often tightly associated in people's minds (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2019). Thus, comparing the two forms of diversity may be critical to isolating people's true perceptions thereof.

The results presented here also show that, to the extent that SES and racial diversity are disentangled, diversity rationales are not uniformly applied across all forms of diversity. As previous research on diversity rationales has not specified the kind of diversity in question (e.g.,

Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Starck et al., 2021), the findings presented here add nuance to the conclusion that diversity is largely instrumentalized among White Americans. The high moral endorsement of SES diversity indicates that the trend of moral diversity rationales being phased out over time (Frymer & Skrentny, 2003) may not be true for all forms of diversity. Moral rationales are still applied, though perhaps rather selectively.

Limitations and Future Directions

Though insightful, the use of theory-driven a priori mediators could be seen as a limitation of the current research. There may be other mechanisms or more parsimonious accounts to explain the greater moralization of SES diversity. However, this gap presents opportunities for future research, for example, using open-ended or other data-driven techniques. One opportunity is to ask participants to explain, in their own words, why SES or racial diversity is specifically a moral obligation and/or provides instrumental benefits. For example, previous qualitative research on perceptions of SES diversity has revealed that students (of both high and low SES) often view SES as having fluid boundaries and see college enrollment as a vehicle for low-SES students to change their SES (Buckley & Park, 2021; Radmacher & Azmitia, 2013). It is therefore plausible that perceptions of FLI students as having low entitativity or high assimilability could also be driving the moralization of SES diversity, in that FLI students do not pose a threat to the prototypical culture of higher education (Agadullina & Lovakov, 2018; Danbold & Huo, 2022; Effron & Knowles, 2015). With that in mind, there are promising opportunities for future studies to identify additional mechanisms of moralization.

Future work could also test whether the mechanisms outlined above are true mediators by manipulating them, and seeing what effects this has on rationale endorsement. Of key importance would be investigating whether specifying that an SES-diversity policy favors URM

students more so than White students reduces moralization. In other words, is there something intrinsically appealing about supporting FLI students, or does the appeal of SES diversity stem largely from its broadening of diversity efforts to include White students? Additionally, with the general insight that different forms of diversity are rationalized for different reasons, future research can begin to examine the downstream effects of moralizing or instrumentalizing different kinds of diversity. The next chapter will examine how moralization is tied to policy support, but there are other plausible implications as well. For example, moralizing a certain form of diversity highly could improve intergroup relations toward the marginalized students in question (e.g., Kauff et al., 2020). If this moralization is a norm on campus, this could perhaps subsequently improve marginalized students' well-being at school.

Finally, as SES-diversity efforts become more predominant (e.g., Piper, 2018), it would be fruitful to track changes over time in the rationales applied thereto. If SES diversity supplants racial diversity, will there be an equivalent shift from moral to instrumental rationales that was seen with regard to racial diversity, especially if "SES diversity" becomes an implicit synonym of "racial diversity"? This work should also extend to examining how schools—not just laypeople—think and talk about SES diversity, particularly in relation to racial diversity. This could involve studies with higher-education administrators who have insight into the priorities of universities, particularly after the Supreme Court's ban on race-based affirmative action (e.g., Garces & Bilyalov, 2019; Garces & Cogburn, 2015). It could also involve empirically assessing institutional discourse surrounding SES diversity (e.g., Russell Pascual et al., 2024; Starck et al., 2021). For example, scraping university press releases about joining the American Talent Initiative or responding to the Supreme Court's affirmative action ban could provide generative insights.

Chapter 2: How Moralization Shapes Policy Preferences

The previous chapter emphasized that the endorsement of moral rationales is a key factor in differentiating people's attitudes and perceptions toward socioeconomic versus racial diversity. In the current chapter, I propose that examining the relative moralization of different types of diversity can help explain why some types receive more public support than others. Although a majority of Americans generally view diversity in a positive light (Minkin, 2023), there is strong evidence to suggest that some forms of diversity (i.e., socioeconomic diversity) are seen more positively than others (i.e., racial diversity). White Americans have been shown to support policies that target socioeconomic status (SES; e.g., college scholarships for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds) more than the equivalent policy that targets race (e.g., college scholarships for Black students; Feldman & Huddy, 2005); this effect is not found among Black Americans (E. Bell, 2021; Bobo & Kluegel, 1993). On top of that, White Americans are willing to go to greater lengths to implement such SES-diversity policies, such as being willing to pay almost twice as much in taxes for policies that would enhance SES diversity versus ones that would enhance racial diversity (E. Bell, 2021). I argue that such effects are driven in part by the greater moralization of SES diversity relative to racial diversity, given that morally based attitudes more strongly predict policy support than non-moral attitudes. In other words, the strength with which diversity policies are supported and pursued hinges on the degree to which the diversity type in question is moralized, more so than the degree to which it is instrumentalized.

Instrumental Rationales and Policy Support

Despite this assertion, it must be acknowledged that instrumental rationales are still linked to policy support, particularly in the legal domain. The instrumental diversity rationale as

it is often espoused today was developed specifically to convince the conservative Supreme Court to support race-based affirmative action in the landmark case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* in 1978 (Bazelon, 2023). The instrumental argument proved successful, as the *Bakke* case ultimately upheld race-based affirmative action. Later, in the 2003 Supreme Court case *Grutter v. Bollinger*, the lawyers defending University of Michigan's use of race-conscious admissions similarly emphasized the educational value of racial diversity—rather than the continued prevalence of racial inequality—in an effort to win over the swing votes on the Court (Foner, 2003). Again, this tactic successfully upheld race-based affirmative action. While the recent *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* case struck down the use of race-based affirmative action, instrumental rationales were still employed to argue in favor of racial-diversity policies, with supporters citing that "universities have a compelling interest in pursuing the educational benefits that flow from student bodies that are diverse" (*Brief in Opposition, Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, 2021, p. 13). Given that diversity rationales are, at their core, arguments in favor of diversity, it is unsurprising that instrumental rationales are associated with efforts to promote and maintain diversity practices.

Empirical psychological research also shows that cognitive constructs that share tenets with instrumental diversity rationales are associated with more positive intergroup attitudes and interactions, which are precursors to supporting diversity policies (Federico & Sidanius, 2002). Specifically, pro-diversity beliefs (PDBs) are a set of attitudes centered on the notion that diversity within groups or within society as a whole is an asset that facilitates goal attainment and group functioning (Kauff et al., 2021). Individuals higher in PDBs report lower social-distance preferences toward outgroup members (e.g., less reluctance to move to areas where many immigrants live), which is driven by lower levels of both symbolic and realistic intergroup

threat (Kauff & Wagner, 2012). Experimentally inducing PDBs also produces similar effects. In one study, participants who read a passage indicating that ethnically heterogenous teams outperform homogenous teams reported lower social-distance preferences compared to those who read a passage indicating the opposite (i.e., that homogenous teams outperform heterogenous teams; Kauff & Wagner, 2012). In another study, participants exposed to a PDBs manipulation exhibited a greater willingness to vote for political candidates with foreign-sounding names compared to those in the control conditions, who either read no passage or a passage unrelated to diversity (Kauff et al., 2013). Thus, instrumentalizing beliefs centered on outgroup members' benefit to groups and society seem to promote the pursuit of diversity, at least compared to the absence of such beliefs (though see Bowman Williams, 2017).

That said, when pro-diversity attitudes are based on instrumental rationales, support for diversity pursuits has been shown to be vulnerable to changes in circumstances. Specifically, under instrumental frames, when the supposed benefits to one's group or to society are not realized, support for diversity efforts wanes. In a series of studies, Birnbaum and colleagues (2022) found that participants who primarily rationalized diversity on instrumental (vs. moral) grounds showed reduced levels of support for organizational diversity efforts when the organization was described as struggling financially. This pattern was found consistently regardless of whether diversity rationale was being measured endogenously or induced experimentally. Moreover, the pattern was found even when the organization was described as having achieved egalitarian outcomes; so long as the organization was experiencing financial decline, those with an instrumental rationale for diversity curtailed their support for diversity efforts (Birnbaum et al., 2022). In other words, diversity-policy support grounded in instrumental rationales appears to be contingent primarily on the institutional benefits of diversity (e.g.,

increased financial success, student performance, innovation) coming to fruition. Critically, in the domain of higher education, it may be difficult to track whether instrumental goals are being met, such as whether diversity is indeed facilitating learning or preparing students for the workforce. This difficulty in capturing and assessing the supposed benefits of diversity could therefore make people hesitant to engage in more rigorous or radical diversity policies, despite these kinds of approaches being evidently more successful at expanding diversity (Portocarrero & Carter, 2022).

Moral Rationales and Policy Support

Turning back to the primary assertion, I contend that moral rationales are more strongly tied to policy support, and do not suffer from the same conditionality as do instrumental rationales. First, just like instrumental rationales, moral rationales are also linked to policy support in the legal realm. In the post-Civil Rights era, court cases that upheld race-based affirmative action programs were often decided on the basis of moral arguments centered around desegregation and equal rights (Frymer & Skrentny, 2003). For example, in *DeFunis v. Odegaard* (1974), the Washington State Supreme Court upheld the University of Washington Law School's practice of racial classification in the admissions process, citing the practice as a means to remedy past injustices and prevent the perpetuation of further discrimination. Outside of higher education, affirmative action programs were also pursued as a way to preclude racial discrimination in employment. For example, when the Contractors Association of Eastern Pennsylvania sued to strike down a plan to integrate the construction industries in and around Philadelphia, the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit ruled that the plan was "designed to overcome existing evils" (*Contractors Ass'n v. Secretary of Labor*, 1971). This ruling was in line with other court decisions at the time affirming that anti-discrimination

programs served compensatory or remedial purposes (for a review, see Frymer & Skrentny, 2003).

On a psychological level, moral rationales—whether directed toward diversity or other social issues—engender support for policies in favor of the issue in question. An abundance of research in moral psychology has documented that holding a moral basis for an attitude predicts stronger support for pro-attitudinal policies and relevant behaviors. In their review of moral convictions, Skitka and colleagues (2021) enumerate the many ways that moral convictions predict social and political engagement, including both intended and actual engagement in activism and voting. Van Zomeren et al. (2011) found, for example, that the strength of people's moral convictions against discrimination predicted their desire to engage in collective action, such as signing a petition or attending a demonstration. Similarly, Luttrell et al. (2016) found that being induced to view one's attitudes as stemming from a moral (vs. non-moral) basis strengthens the association between attitudes and related behavioral intentions; in other words, individuals with positive attitudes toward a certain policy are more likely to engage in pro-policy behavior when they view their attitudes as morally (vs. non-morally) based. In a more direct test of diversity rationales, Trawalter and colleagues (2016) had White participants make hypothetical hiring decisions after exposing them to a prompt emphasizing either that "diversity is good for organizations" (e.g., because it "enables creative problem solving") or that "diversity is fair" (e.g., because it "promotes group equity"). The authors found that those in the "diversity is fair" condition were more likely to select the Black candidate as their top choice compared to those in the "diversity is good for organizations" condition (see also Bowman Williams, 2017; Bowman Williams & Cox, 2022). Collectively, across different studies and measures, research

points to moral attitudes as being a key predictor of actively supporting or engaging in attitude-relevant outcomes.

Furthermore, unlike with instrumental rationales, attitudes that are based on moral rationales demonstrate greater robustness and consistency in the face of circumstantial changes and challenges. Specifically, policy support that is grounded in moral rationales is not dependent on material benefits being realized. For example, in a series of studies on PDBs, participants who were exposed to "justice-based" PDBs showed no or minimal changes in their anti-outgroup sentiments when diversity was described as having a negative (vs. positive) impact on institutional or societal outcomes; in contrast, participants who were exposed to instrumentality-based PDBs exhibited greater outgroup prejudice in response to negative (vs. positive) outcomes (Kauff et al., 2020). Similarly, as demonstrated by Birnbaum and colleagues (2022), participants who were exposed to a moral diversity rationale showed no difference in their support for an organization's diversity policy when the organization was described as either thriving or struggling, compared to a no-information control. Those who were exposed to an instrumental rationale, however, showed lower levels of support in the financial-struggle (vs. no information) condition, and greater levels of support in the financial-thriving (vs. no information) condition. Taken together, these studies suggest that, unlike instrumentally motivated support, morally motivated support does not fluctuate with the bottom line.

Finally, more so than just improving the likelihood and consistency of pro-attitudinal behavior, moral rationales likely also increase the strength of the policies individuals should be willing to pursue. Extant literature points to an association between the moral basis of an attitude and the lengths to which people will go to act upon that attitude. For example, the strength of moral concerns positively predicts engaging in behaviors that are personally costly or socially

risky. Such behaviors can include whistleblowing (i.e., reporting unethical behavior occurring within one's own group; Dungan et al., 2019), publicly displaying counter-normative behaviors (Brezina & Piquero, 2007; Hornsey et al., 2003), boycotting big businesses and paying more for ethically produced good (Cronin et al., 2012; Luttrell et al., 2021), and supporting or even partaking in violent collective action (Ginges, 2019). Evidently, morality is a basis for taking action that is logistically difficult, socially unpopular, or contradictory to one's own self-interest.

Extending these results to the issue of diversity in higher education, moral rationales should be positively associated with support for policies that include structures of accountability and oversight and/or are tied to strict diversity goals and timelines, as these are logistically difficult and likely unpopular. Moral rationales should also be positively associated with support for policies that explicitly weight an applicant's minoritized social identity in admissions because such policies often contradict a person's self-interest if that person is from a high-status social group. Though no empirical research has directly tested this, qualitative research suggests that universities espousing moral values and norms implement more intentional and involved strategies to recruit underrepresented students—that is, policies and programs that are more logistically challenging. Meanwhile, universities with instrumental values and norms show less commitment to such diversity strategies (Gunther & Benson, 2021). With that in mind, I propose that moral rationales—unlike instrumental rationales—are uniquely tied to support for particularly strong, intentional diversity policies.

Chapter Overview

To my knowledge, no research has examined whether people's support for such strong, intentional diversity policies differs for different kinds of diversity, nor how it is tied to people's endorsement of diversity rationales. Previous research has documented that the more strongly a

diversity policy consciously attends to a person's social identity, the less majority-group members support it (Knight & Hebl, 2005; Kravitz, 1995; Leslie & Flynn, 2022; Lowery et al., 2006). However, this research has not directly examined whether this varies depending on which social identity (e.g., race/ethnicity vs. SES) the policies are attending to. Moreover, while previous research has documented greater support for SES diversity than for racial diversity among White Americans (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Carlson & Bell, 2021; Feldman & Huddy, 2005), the possibility that this is driven by the greater moralization—as opposed to the greater instrumentalization—of one over the other has not been examined. As such, the current chapter tests the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): White Americans are generally more supportive of SES-diversity policies than racial-diversity policies.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): White Americans' endorsement of moral rationales mediates their preference for SES-diversity policies over racial-diversity policies more strongly than their endorsement of instrumental rationales.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): White Americans' preference for SES-diversity policies over racial-diversity policies is stronger when the policies are strong (e.g., explicitly weight an applicant's social identity in admissions or have high accountability structures) compared to when they are weak. In other words, *H1* is moderated by policy strength.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): White Americans' endorsement of moral rationales mediates their preference for strong SES-diversity policies over strong racial-diversity policies more strongly than their endorsement of instrumental rationales. This will not be the case when diversity policies are weak. In other words, *H2* is moderated by policy strength.

In Study 2.1, secondary analysis using the data from Chapter 1 is conducted to test *H1* and *H2*. In each study from Chapter 1, participants indicated their general approval of the diversity type in question. These responses are analyzed to examine if there is a difference in White Americans' support for SES diversity versus racial diversity regardless of policy strength, and whether this is driven by endorsement of moral rationales more so than by endorsement of instrumental rationales. In Study 2.2 and in Study 2.3 (a conceptual replication of Study 2.2), *H3* and *H4* are tested by asking White Americans how much they support diversity policies of varying strength as a way to examine whether *H1* and *H2* are moderated by policy strength.

Study 2.1

Study 2.1 seeks initial evidence into the degree to which endorsement of moral and instrumental rationales drives White Americans' general support for SES and racial diversity.

Methods

Participants

The data for Study 2.1 come from the 1,549 White participants sampled as part of the studies from Chapter 1. For the full demographic characteristics of the sample, readers are referred back to Chapter 1.

Procedure

In each of the five studies presented in Chapter 1, participants were first asked a single item assessing their general approval of SES diversity and racial diversity at the beginning of the respective block. The data from the five studies were analyzed individually as well in the aggregate (excluding the Black participants from Study 1.1c). For the purposes of aggregation, the scores of both the dependent variable (diversity support) and the mediators (moral endorsement and instrumental endorsement) were standardized within each study prior to

combining the data. For ease of comprehension, results from the aggregated data are presented below; the results from the individual studies can be found in Appendix D.

Measures

Diversity Support. To assess how much participants support universities' commitment to the particular diversity in question, a single item was included at the start of each block. In Studies 1.1a-c, participants were asked "To what extent do you agree that universities should be focusing on the ___ diversity of their student body?", referring to the diversity type in question (i.e., socioeconomic, racial and ethnic, or gender diversity). Participants indicated their agreement on a 6-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 6 = *Strongly agree*). In Study 1.2, participants were asked "How much do you oppose/support these efforts?" after being told universities were striving to either diversify along socioeconomic status, diversify along race/ethnicity, or increase undergraduate enrollment. Participants indicated their support on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly oppose*, 7 = *Strongly support*). Given the two different scales used, the scores of diversity support were standardized within each study prior to aggregation.

Results

Diversity Support

To first examine how diversity support varies as a function of diversity type, a mixed-effects ANOVA was run where diversity type predicted diversity support. For the purpose of this analysis, the comparison condition from Studies 1.1a-c (i.e., gender diversity) and from Study 1.2 (i.e., increased enrollment) were combined into a single condition. The model included a random intercept for participant nested within study, and the presentation order of SES versus race was included as a covariate (which is not of theoretical interest and thus not discussed in the results below).

Results revealed a significant effect of diversity type, $F(2, 3007.05) = 241.049$, $p < .001$. Examining the differences further revealed that White participants supported SES diversity ($M = 0.27$, $SD = 0.87$) more than racial diversity ($M = 0.00$, $SD = 1.08$), $t(3004) = 10.887$, $p < .001$. Examining the non-critical comparisons, participants also supported SES diversity more than the comparison condition ($M = -0.27$, $SD = 0.97$), $t(3008) = 21.956$, $p < .001$, and racial diversity more than the comparison condition, $t(3009) = 11.039$, $p < .001$.

Mediation

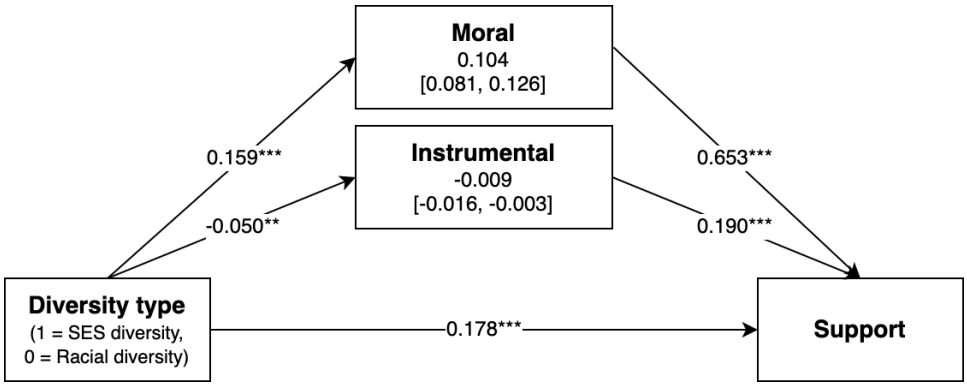
Next, mediation analyses were conducted examining whether moral endorsement underlies the higher support for SES diversity over racial diversity to a greater extent than instrumental endorsement. The model tested whether there was a significant indirect effect of moral endorsement in the relationship between diversity type and policy support, and whether this was stronger than the indirect effect of instrumental endorsement. This analysis was conducted in lavaan (Rosseel, 2012) and looked only at the comparison between SES diversity and racial diversity (dummy coded such that 1 = SES diversity, and 0 = racial diversity). Monte Carlo 95% confidence intervals were used from the package semTools (Jorgensen et al., 2022) based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples, and the standard errors were clustered at the participant level. The presentation order of SES diversity versus racial diversity was included as a control variable at all paths in the mediation analysis (the results of which are not discussed). Again, only the results from the aggregated White-participant data are presented below; study-level results can be found in Appendix D.

Results from the mediation model are presented in Figure 2.1. As a validation of the results presented in Chapter 1, the first step in the mediation revealed that White participants endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity more than for racial diversity, $p < .001$. With the data

aggregated as they are here, the model also indicated that participants endorsed instrumental reasons for racial diversity more than for SES diversity, $p = .002$ (an effect that was not consistently found in each individual study in Chapter 1). At the second step in the model, moral endorsement significantly predicted diversity support, $p < .001$. Instrumental endorsement also significantly predicted diversity support, $p < .001$, though the effect size was relatively weaker. In turn, both the indirect effect of moral endorsement and the indirect effect of instrumental endorsement were significant (as indicated by the confidence intervals not containing zero), though the indirect effect of moral endorsement was much larger in magnitude than that of instrumental endorsement.

Figure 2.1

Study 2.1 Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Diversity Support



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$.

Discussion

Results from Study 2.1 offer preliminary evidence in line with *H1* and *H2* as it relates to diversity in the abstract (i.e., when not referring to specific policies). First, White Americans are more supportive of SES diversity than racial diversity. Second, endorsement of moral rationales underlies this support more strongly than endorsement of instrumental rationales, as indicated by

the effect size of moral endorsement on diversity support at the second step in the mediation being over three times that of instrumental endorsement. Finally, the large positive indirect effect of moral endorsement relative to the smaller negative indirect effect of instrumental endorsement suggests that White Americans support SES diversity more than racial diversity in part *because* they moralize SES diversity more; the greater instrumentalization of racial diversity relative to SES diversity does not have an equivalently strong enough effect to boost support for racial diversity. As this study only included a single measure of support, it lays the groundwork for more directly testing the effect of variation in policy strength in the following studies.

Study 2.2

Study 2.1 offered preliminary evidence for the hypothesis that White Americans are more supportive of SES diversity than racial diversity, and that this emerges from the endorsement of moral rationales in particular. However, there is a well-established gap between what people say they support in the abstract and what concrete implementations they actually support. This *principle-policy gap* (or *principle-implementation gap*) is particularly prevalent when it comes to diversity, as documented by decades of research (Glasford, 2022; Jackman, 1978; Tuch & Hughes, 2011; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). In a recent demonstration of this effect, Bowman Williams and Cox (2022) found that 80 percent of their respondents indicated that diversity is an important goal for organizations. However, in a workplace decision-making scenario, only about one third of respondents actually recommended a Black employee for a promotion over a less senior White employee. Evidently, there is a stark contrast in people's willingness to take a position toward an abstract issue and their willingness to apply tangible efforts in favor of said position. With that in mind, Study 2.2 sought to measure preferences

toward specific policies to assess the heterogeneity in people's support for diversity policies as a function of the policies' strength.

Study 2.2 followed the same basic structure as the studies in Chapter 1, but an additional set of items describing specific policies was added and participants had to indicate their level support for each one. The policies varied in the strength with which a university would recruit first-generation/low-income (FLI) students or underrepresented racial/ethnic minority (URM) students, and the degree to which it would take SES or race/ethnicity into consideration in admissions decisions. Study 2.2 consists of two separate studies. The procedure and items assessing the key variables of interest (rationale endorsement and policy support) were identical in both, but the first study was a pilot containing a number of additional exploratory variables that were non-significant and thus removed in the second study. The data were aggregated for the purposes of statistical power and ease of comprehension, the results of which are results below; the individual results can be found in Appendix E. The design, hypotheses, and analysis plans of the second study were preregistered (https://osf.io/wgs3k).

Methods

Participants

A total of 600 White Americans were recruited via the online survey platform Prolific. Two hundred participants were recruited for the pilot. For the replication, a power analysis using the pilot data based on the effect of diversity type on moral endorsement (i.e., the first step in the mediation) in a within-subject design indicated needing about 355 participants to achieve 80% power. Based on the expected removal of about 10% of participants, 400 participants were recruited. Across the whole sample, a total of 40 participants were removed according to the following exclusion criteria: identifying as a race other than monoracially White, indicating

answering randomly, spending more than 3 *SD* greater than the mean completion time on the study, or failing more than one attention check. Thus, the final sample consisted of 560 participants (M_{age} = 38.83, SD_{age} = 12.99; cisgender men = 48.39%, cisgender women = 50.00%, non-binary/other = 1.61%). The pattern of results is identical with all participants included.

Procedure

Participants were recruited once in September 2022 and once in November 2022. After indicating their consent, participants were presented with their first diversity type, either SES diversity or racial diversity (the order of which was counterbalanced). Participants read a short text that said the following: "Many colleges and universities in the US are dedicated to diversity. These days, many schools are committed to diversity specifically with regard to [socioeconomic status / race and ethnicity]. This encompasses a variety of strategies focusing on [first-generation and/or low-income students / racial and ethnic minority students]." Then participants were asked whether they feel universities should value the corresponding diversity type and provided their reasoning in an open textbox. Next, participants were presented with a list of ten reasons in randomized order—five moral reasons and five instrumental reasons—and indicated their agreement with each. Finally, participants indicated their support for six different diversity policies that differed in the weight given to social-group membership in the admissions process. Participants then repeated this process a second time for the other diversity type. To end, participants answered a set of demographic questions.

Measures

Moral Endorsement. Endorsement of moral rationales was measured using participants' average agreement to the following five reasons: "It is a moral obligation", "It is the fair and equitable thing to do", "It would help redress both past and present inequities in society", "It

would ensure that no group is excluded or disadvantaged", and "It would help ensure that the benefits of education are more evenly distributed throughout society" (α_{SES} = .93, α_{race} = .95). Participants indicated their responses on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Instrumental Endorsement. Endorsement of instrumental rationales was measured using participants' average agreement to the following five reasons: "Their presence on campus will enrich all students' educational experience", "Their presence on campus will prepare other students for the 'real' world", "The perspectives they would bring will fuel innovation and creativity", "Other students could learn from their perspectives and experiences", and "Society is becoming more diverse and globalized, and students need to learn to interact with different kinds of people" (α_{SES} = .92, α_{race} = .94). Participants indicated their responses on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Policy Support. Participants saw six different policies that differed in how strongly social-group membership was considered during the admissions process and were asked to indicate their support for a university adopting each one. Five of the policies were adapted from Lowery et al. (2007). In order from weakest to strongest, these policies were: a) an *identity-blind* policy "whereby an applicant's [SES / race] is completely ignored throughout the entire application procedure", b) an *outreach* program "whereby the university makes extra efforts to get [FLI / URM] students to apply but does not take [SES / race/ethnicity] into consideration when making admissions decisions", c) a *training* program "through which [FLI / URM] students can receive supplemental training to prepare them for the application process. However, [SES is / race/ethnicity are] not considered when making admissions decisions", d) a *tie-breaker* policy "in which [FLI / URM] students are selected over students [from other socioeconomic

backgrounds / of other ethnicities] when the two applicants are equally qualified", and e) a *minimum qualifications* policy "whereby a [FLI / URM] student can get admitted over students [from other socioeconomic backgrounds / of other ethnicities] as long as the [FLI / URM] student meets a minimal level of qualifications." Based on other research indicating that White Americans are particularly averse to racial quotas and often see them as anti-White discrimination (Kravitz, 1995; Unzueta et al., 2008), a sixth item was added, a *quota* policy (though the word was not used in the description). This policy stated that "a certain proportion of the student body must be made up of [FLI / URM] students." Participants indicated their support for each policy on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly oppose*, 7 = *Strongly support*). Based on the results from an exploratory factor analysis, the outreach and training programs were combined to create a measure of *weak-policy support* ($\alpha_{SES} = .78$, $\alpha_{race} = .67$), and the tie-breaker, minimum qualifications, and quota policies were combined to create a measure of *strong-policy support* ($\alpha_{SES} = .84$, $\alpha_{race} = .87$). The identity-blind policy indicated a high degree of cross-loading on both weak-policy support and (negatively) on strong-policy support. As such, this item was dropped from the main analyses; analyses with the item included can be found in Appendix F.

Results

Rationale Endorsement

To first test the endorsement of moral versus instrumental rationales for each diversity type, the same mixed-effects ANOVA as in Chapter 1 was run, with a random intercept for participant nested within study. Results revealed no main effect of diversity type, $p = .364$, but a significant main effect for rationale, $F(1, 559) = 30.569$, $p < .001$.

This main effect was qualified by the expected interaction between diversity type and rationale, $F(1, 559) = 37.358$, $p < .001$. Based on previous findings, participants were expected

to endorse moral rationales for SES diversity more than for racial diversity, and post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed this to be the case (M_{SES} = 5.55, SD_{SES} = 1.40; M_{race} = 5.40, SD_{race} = 1.61), $t(927) = 3.996$, $p < .001$. Additionally, participants endorsed instrumental reasons for racial diversity (M = 5.72, SD = 1.33) more than for SES diversity (M = 5.63, SD = 1.26), $t(927) = -2.418$, $p = .016$. These results replicate the general patterns documented in Chapter 1.

Policy Support

To test whether participants' support for SES- versus racial-diversity policies differed as a function of the policies' strength, a 2 (diversity type: SES, race) X 2 (policy strength: strong, weak) mixed-effects ANOVA was run next. This was done using the lmer function of the R package lme4 (Bates et al., 2015). To account for the repeated-measures nature of the design, a random intercept for participant and random slopes for diversity type and policy strength were included, as well as a random intercept for participant nested within study. The presentation order of SES versus race was included as a covariate. Sum-to-zero contrasts were used for both variables (SES = 1, race = -1; strong = 1, weak = -1). Significant effects were determined by *p*-values based on Type 3 tests using Kenward-Roger approximation for degrees of freedom, as implemented in the Anova function of the package car (Fox & Weisberg, 2019). The interaction was examined by running post-hoc pairwise comparisons using the emmeans function with Tukey adjustments for multiple comparisons (Lenth et al., 2021).

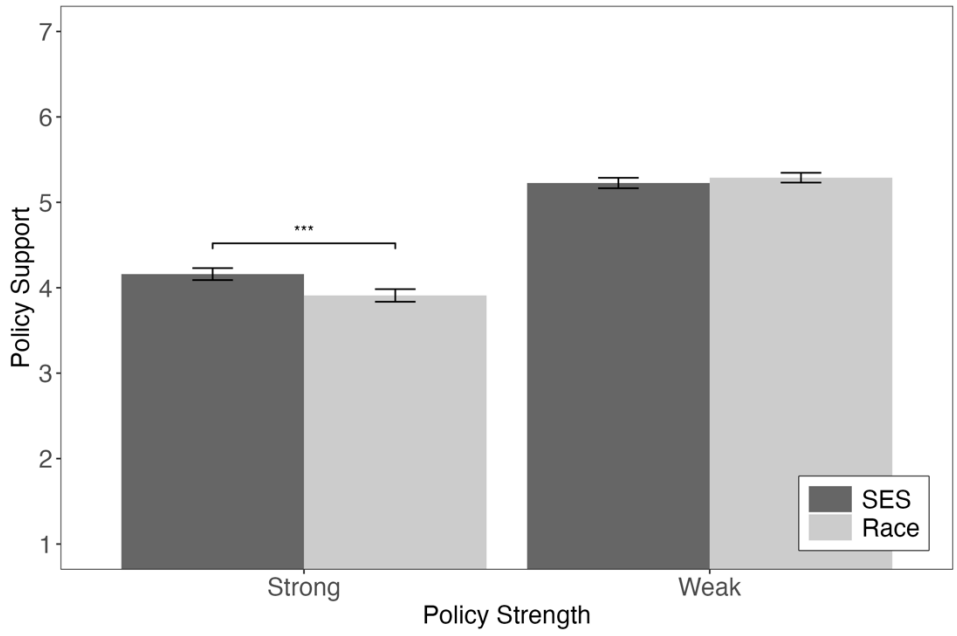
Results revealed a main effect of diversity type, $F(1, 559) = 7.824$, $p = .005$, such that, in general, participants supported SES-diversity policies more than racial-diversity policies, $t(559) = 2.797$, $p = .005$. There was also a significant main effect of policy strength, $F(1, 559) = 227.765$, $p < .001$, such that, in general, participants supported weak diversity policies more than strong diversity policies, $t(559) = -15.092$, $p < .001$. More importantly, these main effects were

qualified by the expected interaction between diversity type and policy strength, $F(1, 559) = 23.645$, $p < .001$.

Unpacking the interaction revealed that, as hypothesized, participants supported strong SES-diversity policies ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.66$) more than strong racial-diversity policies ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.75$), $t(1116) = 5.384$, $p < .001$, see Figure 2.2. Moreover, there was no difference in participants' support for weak racial-diversity policies ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.38$) versus weak SES-diversity policies ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.46$), $p = .179$.

Figure 2.2

Mean Levels of Support for Strong and Weak Diversity Policies in Study 2.2



Note. Error bars represent ± 1 *SE*. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$.

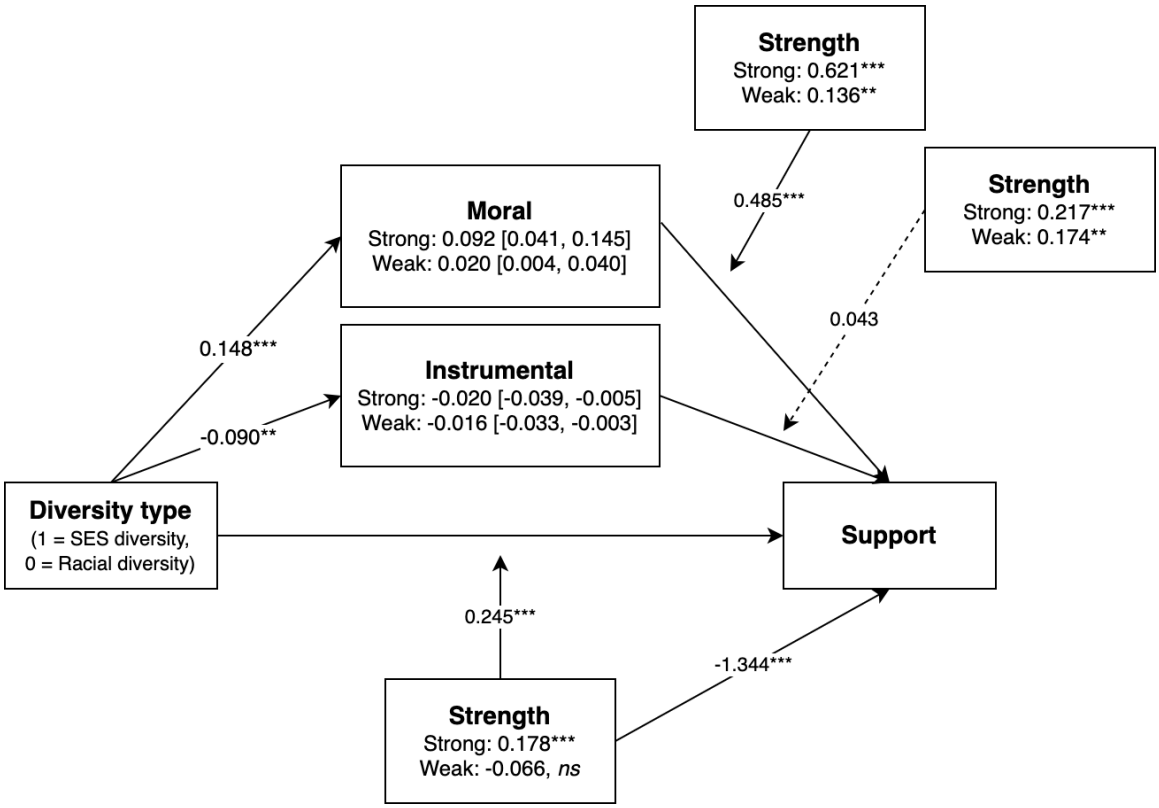
Moderated Mediation

A moderated mediation was run to examine the degree to which moral and instrumental endorsement drive the differences between SES- and racial-diversity policy support as a function of policy strength. The mediation model mirrored that from Study 2.1, but policy strength

moderated the *b*-paths from moral and instrumental endorsement to policy support, as well as the direct path from diversity type to policy support. This was done by adding interactions between policy strength and moral endorsement, instrumental endorsement, and diversity type (respectively) to the model. For this model, strong policies were coded as 1, and weak policies were coded as 0. Results are depicted in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3

Study 2.2 Moderated Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Policy Support Moderated by Policy Strength



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. Dashed lines indicate a non-significant path. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *ns* = not significant.

The first step in the mediation replicated the results presented above. Participants endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity more than for racial diversity, $p < .001$, and instrumental reasons for racial diversity more than for SES diversity, $p = .006$.

The second step in the mediation yielded a significant policy strength X moral endorsement interaction, $p < .001$, indicating that policy strength moderates the relationship between moral endorsement and policy support when comparing strong policies to weak policies. Moral endorsement significantly predicted support for both strong policies, $p < .001$, and weak policies, $p = .010$, but as indicated by the significant interaction, moral endorsement's effect on support for strong policies was significantly larger than its effect on support for weak policies.

The policy strength X instrumental endorsement interaction was not significant, $p = .633$, indicating that the relationship between instrumental endorsement and policy support does not differ between strong and weak policies, both of which were significant, both ps $< .004$.

Finally, turning to the indirect effects, all of them were significant. For strong policies, the indirect effect of moral endorsement was noticeably larger than the indirect effect of instrumental endorsement, in absolute terms. Meanwhile, for weak policies, the indirect effects of moral endorsement and instrumental endorsement were more similar in absolute terms. In other words, in line with *H4*, White Americans' endorsement of moral rationales mediates their preference for strong SES- versus racial-diversity policies more strongly than their endorsement of instrumental rationales, which is less so the case for the weak policies.

Another indication of the importance of moral endorsement for strong-policy support is that the indirect effect of moral endorsement was larger for strong policies than for weak policies, and a contrast between the two effects revealed this difference to be statistically

significant, $b = 0.072$, $SE = .024$, $p = .003$. Meanwhile, the indirect effect of instrumental endorsement for strong policies was statistically indistinguishable from that of weak policies, $p = .642$.

Discussion

Using more specific measures of policy support, Study 2.2 showed White Americans' greater support for SES diversity over racial diversity as found in Study 2.1 is especially—or perhaps only—true when participants are considering strong diversity policies. In this case, strong policies comprise those wherein a student's SES or race/ethnicity are explicitly used to make admissions decisions. Weaker policies (i.e., where universities target underrepresented students in the application process only but not in admissions decisions) are supported to the same degree regarding SES and racial diversity. Together, these findings provide support for *H3*.

Additionally, in line with *H4*, this study found that SES diversity is moralized to a greater degree than racial diversity (again replicating the overarching finding from Chapter 1) and that this underlies the greater support for strong SES-diversity policies versus strong racial-diversity policies. Importantly, the effect of moral endorsement on policy support was highest for strong policies. This is evident in relation to both the relatively smaller effect of moral endorsement on weak-policy support and the relatively smaller effect of instrumental endorsement on strong-policy support.

Finally, the fact that both rationales remained significant in the presence of the other suggests the endorsement of each one exerts unique influence on increasing support for diversity. This is unsurprising given that instrumental rationales have played a specific role in garnering public support for diversity policies (Bazelon, 2023), while moral attitudes are uniquely important for facilitating political engagement (Skitka et al., 2021). But the relative

predominance of moral over instrumental rationales regarding strong-policy support indicates that moral endorsement may be the more powerful driver of promoting policies that are more likely to effect change (Portocarrero & Carter, 2022).

Study 2.3

Study 2.3 was meant to conceptually replicate Study 2.2 with different stimuli, ones that might more accurately reflect how Americans encounter university approaches to diversity in the real world. The study took inspiration from the American Talent Initiative, a well-funded alliance of over 100 colleges and universities publicly committed to increasing the share of lower-income students at each of their respective institutions (Kurzweil et al., 2021). When a school signs on to the initiative, it pledges to increase its enrollment of lower-income students to 15 percent or higher, depending on the characteristics of the school (Kurzweil et al., 2021). Schools are free to approach this goal in different ways, and these approaches are often broadly spelled out in schools' press releases covering their decision to join the initiative (e.g., Promislo, 2016). As such, rather than presenting participants with a laundry list of possible policies, this study tested whether participants' support for a more holistic approach toward SES or racial diversity were similarly driven by their personal endorsement of rationales, coupled with the strength of the approach taken by the university. Moreover, by having participants consider one approach only, this would remove the ability to contrast multiple different policies side by side. This is likely how individuals generally encounter an organization's diversity policy or program, and perhaps provides a cleaner assessment of policy support by removing the opportunity for comparison. The design, hypotheses, and analysis plan of Study 2.3 were preregistered (https://osf.io/rnz6p).

Methods

Participants

Using the same power analysis as described in Study 2.2, I preregistered recruiting 400 participants. The eligibility and exclusion criteria were also the same as in Study 2.2. The final sample consisted of 373 participants (M_{age} = 41.48, SD_{age} = 13.76; cisgender men = 49.06%, cisgender women = 49.33%, non-binary/other = 1.61%). The pattern of results is nearly identical with all participants included.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from Prolific in April 2023, and participated in a similar procedure as in Study 2.2. After consenting, participants were presented with their first diversity type, either SES diversity or racial diversity (counterbalanced), by reading the same text as in Study 2.2. They then indicated whether they felt it was important for a university to value the aforementioned form of diversity, provided their reasoning in an open textbox, and then rated their agreement with various moral and instrumental rationales regarding the type of diversity in question. Participants then read a description of a specific program aiming to promote said diversity type and indicated their support and perceptions thereof. This procedure was then repeated with the other diversity type. Lastly, participants answered a set of demographic questions.

The strength of the specific diversity program constituted a between-subjects factor. Half the participants were randomly assigned to read about strong programs, while the other half read about weak programs. The description of the [strong / weak] SES-diversity program was as follows:

> (Program name) is a nationwide alliance of over 100 selective colleges and universities, with the shared goal of increasing the number of high-achieving *lower-income students* at

> the nation's top colleges and universities. When a school signs on to (program name), it [publicly pledges / pledges to try] to increase its enrollment of *lower-income students* [to a minimum of 20% by 2030 / within a timeframe of their choosing].

For the racial-diversity program, "underrepresented racial/ethnic minority students" was used in place of "lower-income students." Diversity type constituted a within-subjects factor, meaning participants read about both the program targeting lower-income students and the program targeting underrepresented racial/ethnic minority students.

The description also included three specific details about the SES- or racial-diversity program. In the strong condition, participants read that "Schools must create a strategic plan with a specific timetable for meeting this goal," "Schools are required to form an Equity Committee that oversees, tracks the progress, and ensures adherence to these efforts," and "Schools must conduct an annual progress report and publicize it to members of the university community (e.g., alumni, donors, faculty)." In the weak condition, participants read that "Schools are encouraged to create an internal plan and set approximate dates for meeting their goal," "It is recommended that schools form a group of volunteers from across campus that can see this plan through," and "Schools may want to conduct progress reports on a semi-regular basis to share amongst university leaders."

Measures

Rationale Endorsement. The same items as in Study 2.2 were used to assess moral endorsement ($\alpha_{SES} = .92$, $\alpha_{race} = .95$) and instrumental endorsement ($\alpha_{SES} = .92$, $\alpha_{race} = .94$).

Program Support. To assess support for the diversity program about which they read, participants were asked "To what extent do you support this program?" (1 = *Strongly oppose*, 7 = *Strongly support*).

Perceived Strength. A manipulation check assessed how strong participants felt the program components were. Participants were asked the following six items: "How strong do you find this program to be?", "How concrete is this program?", "How much accountability is there in this program?", "How seriously do you think schools in this program will take their goals?", "How successful do you think schools in this program will be at increasing the enrollment of *lower-income* (underrepresented racial/ethnic minority) students?", and "How committed do you think schools in this program will be to their goals?" Participants answered on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *A great deal*). Items were aggregated to create an index of perceived program strength ($\alpha_{SES} = .94$, $\alpha_{race} = .93$).

Results

Manipulation Check

To first ensure participants were properly interpreting the strong and weak programs as such, a 2 (program strength: strong, weak) X 2 (diversity type: SES, race) multilevel ANOVA predicting perceived strength was run. This yielded only a main effect of program strength, $F(1, 370) = 33.396$, $p < .001$, such that the strong programs ($M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.27$) were perceived as stronger than the weak programs ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(370) = 5.779$, $p < .001$. The interaction was marginally significant, $F(1, 371) = 3.688$, $p = .060$, but the pairwise comparisons indicated that the SES-diversity program and the racial-diversity program did not statistically differ from one another on perceived program strength in either the strong condition, $p = .141$, or the weak condition, $p = .214$. These results indicate the manipulation of program strength was effective, and the perception that the strong program was stronger than the weak program did not differ between the SES- and racial-diversity programs.

Rationale Endorsement

To test the endorsement of moral versus instrumental rationales for each policy, the same mixed-effects ANOVA as in Study 2.2 was run. Results revealed a main effect of diversity type, $F(1, 372) = 10.320$, $p = .001$, and a main effect for rationale, $F(1, 372) = 49.870$, $p < .001$.

These main effects were qualified by the expected interaction between diversity type and rationale, $F(1, 372) = 54.805$, $p < .001$. In support of the hypotheses, and replicating the overarching finding from Chapter 1, the pairwise comparisons revealed that participants endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 1.34$) more than for racial diversity ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.67$), $t(581) = 6.398$, $p < .001$. While not of primary theoretical interest, there was no difference in the endorsement of instrumental reasons between racial diversity ($M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.38$) and SES diversity ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.20$), $p = .436$.

Program Support

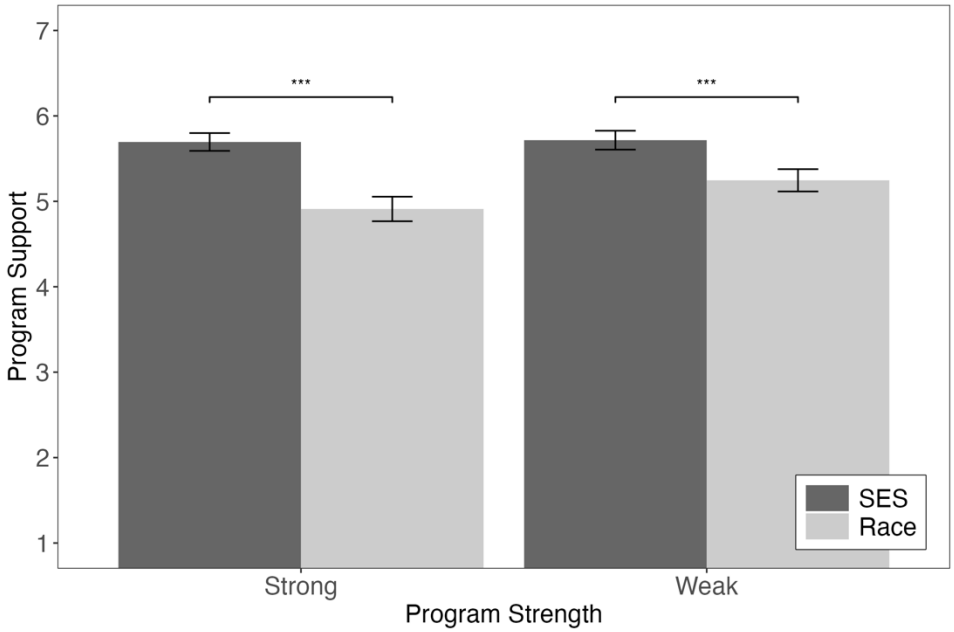
To test participants' support for the strong versus weak diversity program regarding SES and racial diversity, the same mixed-effects ANOVA as in Study 2.2 was run. Results revealed no main effect of program strength, $p = .266$, but there was a significant main effect of diversity type, $F(1, 371) = 72.169$, $p < .001$, such that, in general, participants supported the SES-diversity programs more than the racial-diversity programs, $t(371) = 8.495$, $p < .001$. More importantly, this main effect was qualified by an interaction between program strength and diversity type, $F(1, 371) = 4.532$, $p = .034$.

Unpacking the interaction revealed that, with regard to the strong diversity programs, participants supported the one based on SES ($M = 5.69$, $SD = 1.44$) more than the one based on race/ethnicity ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.98$), $t(371) = 7.584$, $p < .001$, see Figure 2.4. With regard to the weak diversity programs, participants also supported the one based on SES ($M = 5.72$, $SD =$

1.50) more than the one based on race/ethnicity (M = 5.25, SD = 1.77), $t(371) = 4.460$, $p < .001$. A comparison of these two effects indicated that they were significantly different from one another; in line with *H3*, the SES diversity/racial diversity contrast regarding the strong programs was significantly larger than the contrast regarding the weak programs, $b = 0.314$, $SE = 0.148$, $t(371) = 2.129$, $p = .034$.

Figure 2.4

Mean Levels of Support for Strong and Weak Diversity Policies in Study 2.3



Note. Error bars represent ± 1 *SE*. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$.

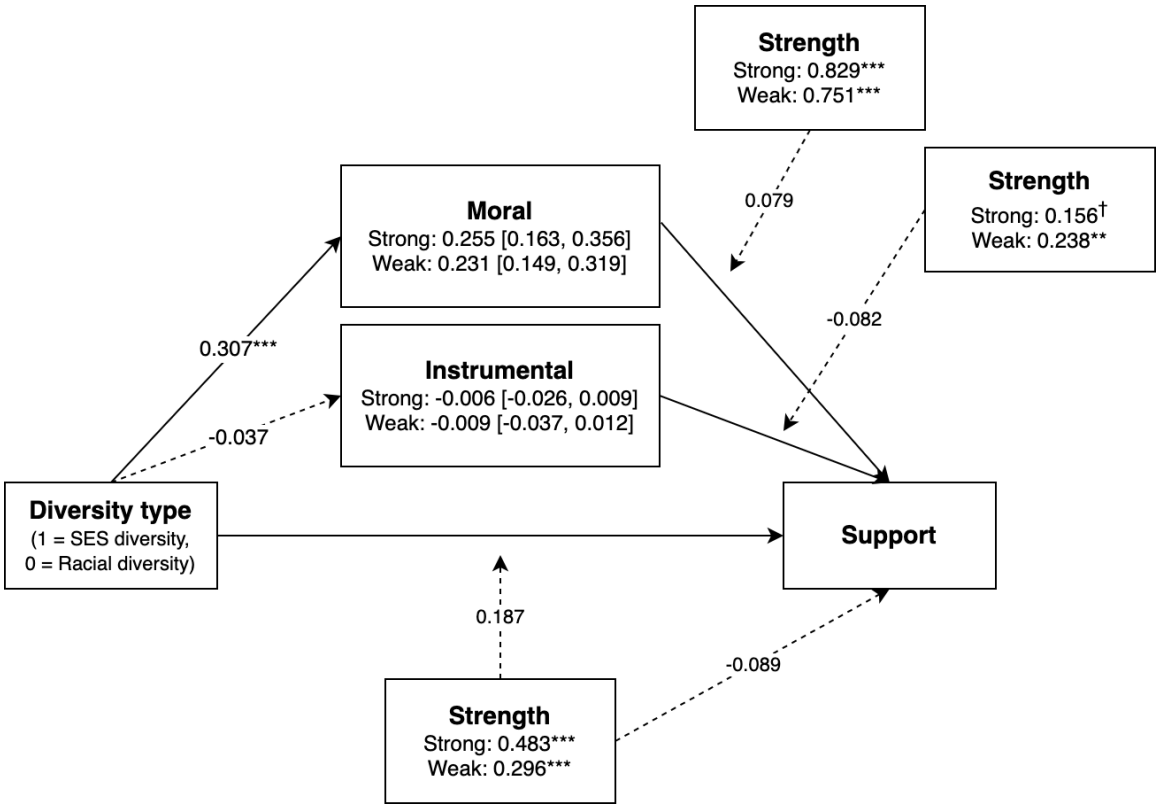
While of less theoretical interest, unpacking the interaction the other way revealed that participants supported the weak racial-diversity program marginally more than the strong-racial diversity program, $t(524) = -1.910$, $p = .057$. There was, however, no difference in support for the strong versus weak SES-diversity programs, $p = .912$.

Moderated Mediation

As in Study 2.2, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted to examine the role of rationale endorsement in the difference between support for the SES- and racial-diversity programs as a function of program strength. In the model, program strength (strong = 1, weak = 0) again moderated the *b*-paths from moral and instrumental endorsement to program support, as well as the direct path from diversity type to program support. Results are depicted in Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.5

Study 2.3 Moderated Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Program Support Moderated by Program Strength



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. Dashed lines indicate a non-significant path. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; † $< .10$; *ns* = not significant.

Replicating the results presented above, the model showed that participants endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity more than for racial diversity, $p < .001$, but there was no difference in the endorsement of instrumental reasons between SES diversity and racial diversity, $p = .415$.

The second step in the mediation revealed that neither the effect of moral endorsement, $p = .436$, nor the effect of instrumental endorsement, $p = .475$, were conditional on program strength. Moral endorsement significantly predicted program support for both the strong and the weak program, both ps $< .001$. Meanwhile, despite the non-significant interaction between instrumental endorsement and program support, the model indicated that instrumental endorsement predicted program support for the weak program, $p = .004$, but only marginally significantly for the strong one, $p = .056$.

Finally, I turn to the indirect effects. For the strong programs, only the indirect effect of moral endorsement was significant. For the weak programs, again only the indirect effect of moral endorsement was significant. The non-significant indirect effect of instrumental endorsement in both conditions is likely attributable to the lack of statistical difference in the instrumental endorsement between SES and racial diversity at the *a*-path.

Meanwhile, although the indirect effect of moral endorsement for the strong programs was, at least descriptively, larger than that for the weak programs, a contrast of the two indirect effects indicated that they were statistically indistinguishable from one another, $p = 441$.

Discussion

In a conceptual replication of Study 2.2, Study 2.3 indicated the hypotheses were largely supported. In line with *H1*, White Americans showed stronger preferences for SES-diversity programs over equivalent racial-diversity programs. And in line with *H3*, this study found that,

although participants preferred the SES-diversity program over the racial-diversity program in both program-strength conditions, the difference was significantly larger in the strong-program condition than in the weak one.

Regarding the extent to which this preference was driven by moral versus instrumental endorsement, *H2* was also substantiated. That is, participants' support was driven by the extent to which they endorsed moral rationales more than instrumental rationales, and, replicating prior results, moral rationales were more strongly applied to SES diversity than to racial diversity. However, unlike in Study 2.2, this study provided limited support for *H4* in that moral endorsement was equally associated with support for both the strong and the weak programs. That said, there is still some indication that the importance of moral endorsement over instrumental endorsement is more pronounced for strong versus weak programs. Specifically, in exploratory analyses not reported here wherein each rationale was run on its own in a single mediator model, the effect of instrumental endorsement on program support (i.e., the *b*-path of instrumental endorsement) was found to be significant for both the strong and weak condition. However, in the parallel mediation with moral endorsement, as reported above, the effect of instrumental endorsement was reduced to non-significance for the strong program. This was not the case for the weak program, where instrumental endorsement remained significant. This hints at the singular importance of moral endorsement in fostering support for strong diversity efforts.

General Discussion

This chapter found that White Americans support SES diversity more than racial diversity, and that this is linked to their endorsement of moral rationales more so than to their endorsement of instrumental rationales. Moreover, both of these effects were found to be more pronounced for strong (vs. weak) diversity efforts—that is, policies that explicitly consider

students' identities or programs that include features like specific goals, timelines, and accountability structures. In other words, it is the greater moralization of SES (vs. racial) diversity that drives the greater support for strong SES-diversity policies over strong racial-diversity policies. Meanwhile, this relationship is attenuated when it comes to weaker diversity policies, in that both moral and instrumental endorsement predict weak-policy support to a similar degree, and also to a relatively lesser degree as compared to strong-policy support.

Implications

The present research aligns closely with different extant literatures. First, it substantiates previous work on attitudes toward diversity. For example, these results replicate prior studies showing that White Americans prefer diversity initiatives that target SES or lower-income individuals over ones that target race or URM individuals (E. Bell, 2021; Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Carlson & Bell, 2021; Feldman & Huddy, 2005). These results also replicate past findings showing that the more weight a hiring or admissions policy places on a person's social identity, the more unfair majority-group members find the policy, and the less they support it (Knight & Hebl, 2005; Kravitz, 1995; Lowery et al., 2006). This is most evident in the overwhelming preference for weak policies over strong ones in Study 2.2. The present research builds on the extant literature by showing that, even if they prefer to not heavily weight a student's social identity in the first place, White Americans are more inclined to weight a student's SES than a student's race.

Second, the current research substantiates the moral psychology literature by illustrating that morally held attitudes are more strongly linked to concrete forms of pro-attitude support than non-morally held attitudes (Skitka et al., 2021). Moreover, the fact that this was more pronounced for stronger (vs. weaker) policies speaks to the importance of moral convictions for

specifically extreme, difficult, self-sacrificial, or unpopular behaviors (Brezina & Piquero, 2007; Cronin et al., 2012; Dungan et al., 2019; Ginges, 2019; Hornsey et al., 2003; Luttrell et al., 2021). The current research contributes to this literature by showing these effects extend to issues of diversity. While diversity beliefs based in practical or economic benefits can make people more willing to engage with and support outgroup members compared to not having such beliefs (Kauff et al., 2021), the current research shows moral reasons grounded in egalitarianism and social justice better predict people's policy support than practical or economic reasons. Even with the divisiveness of policies like affirmative action, supporting diversity for moral reasons reduces the reluctance to support these policies to a greater degree than non-moral (in this case, instrumental) reasons.

The results presented in this chapter can be seen in both a positive and a negative light. On the positive side, to the extent that the high moral endorsement of SES diversity found here is any indication, universities could become more supportive of low-SES students over time. Indeed, many schools already seem to be doing so (e.g., Gunther & Benson, 2021; Kurzweil et al., 2021; Piper, 2018; Rubin, 2011). On the whole, research on diversity rationales has found that organizations espousing high (vs. low or no) moral diversity rationales produce more positive effects on tangible outcomes like hiring and promotions (Bowman Williams & Cox, 2022; Trawalter et al., 2016), and individuals from minoritized groups at these organizations generally show better psychosocial outcomes (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Starck et al., 2021). Likewise, the present research suggests individuals motivated by moral rationales would be more supportive of policies that actively promote such outcomes. Despite the vast literature documenting how unsupportive of lower-income students universities have historically been (Aries & Seider, 2005; Bettencourt, 2021; Croizet et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2011; Jury et al.,

2017; Stephens et al., 2012), we may start to see a remediation thereof. That is, the high moral endorsement of SES diversity suggests schools may implement stronger efforts to ensure the academic and psychological success of low-SES students.

That said, these results also speak to more nefarious trends, namely, the many ways in which White Americans fall short on supporting racial diversity (Binning & Unzueta, 2013; Dover et al., 2016; Kaiser et al., 2013; Petts & Garza, 2021; Thornhill, 2019). Given the finding that instrumental endorsement has only minimal impact on people's support for diversity policies compared to moral endorsement, the ubiquity of instrumental diversity rationales in today's society (Georgeac & Rattan, 2022; Starck et al., 2021), particularly when it comes to racial diversity (Frymer & Skrentny, 2003; Petts & Garza, 2021), is cause for concern. Instrumental rationales may have been pivotal in legally preserving racial-diversity efforts in higher education (Bazelon, 2023). And they may still be conducive to getting certain individuals—such as White individuals, especially conservative ones (Starck et al., 2021, 2024)—on board with an abstract form of diversity. However, the growing instrumentalization of racial diversity could contribute to the decline in support for racial-diversity efforts and the watering down of those efforts that do get enacted (Gramlich, 2023; Mayorga-Gallo, 2019; Thomas, 2019). Strong and highly intentional policies have indeed been found to produce more equitable outcomes compared to weaker policies (Portocarrero & Carter, 2022). Thus, the fact that instrumental rationales are less robustly associated with support for strong policies than moral rationales suggests that institutions solely fostering instrumental rationales for racial diversity will likely fall short on pursuing racial diversity in concrete, impactful ways. Universities need to cultivate a campus-wide commitment to enrolling, supporting, and graduating underrepresented and minoritized students, which these results suggest might be difficult to do without a moral basis therefor.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present research contains the same limitations as all research that employs statistical mediation approaches, such as the inability to disentangle the direction of influence. It is entirely possible, for example, that supporting or adopting strong diversity policies promotes a post-hoc moral rationalization of these decisions (though see Appendix C for an exploratory study demonstrating that moralizing SES diversity more than racial diversity still occurs even in the absence of participants being prompted to consider their level of policy support). At the institutional level, a school with a broader equity-based philosophy might be more intentional and successful in their recruitment of FLI students, but such a philosophy may likewise emerge from having a higher proportion of FLI students on campus (i.e., if these students change the culture and values of the school, or the administration is motivated to espouse rhetoric supportive of its unique student body). At the individual level, prior research has found that social attitudes and beliefs may precede moral attitudes, and then moral attitudes are applied post-hoc to harmonize with these opinions (Hadarics & Kende, 2021). Most likely, these two directions are mutually reinforcing.

The question of directionality goes hand in hand with the possibility that other variables are present in the relationships outlined above. In particular, moral endorsement is likely not the only factor that promotes policy support. For example, personal stake in the outcome in question (e.g., hiring decisions) is a critical driver of support for policies like affirmative action (Glasford, 2022). Additionally, it is possible that the same mediators identified in Chapter 1 operate directly on policy support. In particular, the extent to which a policy supports members of one's (racial) ingroup has been shown to increase support for relevant policies (Lowery et al., 2006). That said, while other factors likely increase diversity-policy support as well, the key takeaway from the

present research is that the link between moral endorsement and policy support is stronger than the link between instrumental endorsement and policy support.

Although attempting to change policy support is beyond the scope of this chapter, future research should examine the extent to which diversity attitudes can be manipulated to be more or less moralized, and whether this in turn shifts policy support. This would give some indication as to the strength of the tie between moral endorsement and policy support, and also address issues of directionality and causality. Comparing this to manipulations targeting instrumentalization would also provide evidence into the relative importance of either diversity rationale on driving policy support. Finally, manipulating diversity rationales would provide an empirical test of the *persuasive-matching hypothesis* (Luttrell et al., 2019) where moral appeals are more persuasive than non-moral ones only to those who already moralized an attitude, and vice versa. This would provide some insight into the practical feasibility of strategically modifying institutional diversity-rationale discourse as a means of shifting people's attitudes.

Chapter 3: The Psychosocial Effects of Prioritizing Socioeconomic Diversity

Given the research presented in the prior chapters, it is perhaps unsurprising that American higher education is seeing a gradual erosion of racial-diversity efforts (Asmelash, 2023) coupled with a growing emphasis on diversity based on socioeconomic status (SES; Kurzweil et al., 2021; Piper, 2018). In Chapter 1, SES diversity was found to be moralized to a greater extent than racial diversity. In Chapter 2, moral rationales were found to be more strongly associated with support for strong diversity policies than instrumental rationales. Together, these findings suggest a psychological basis for the increasing prevalence of SES-diversity policies compared to racial-diversity policies.

Simultaneously, on-the-ground political trends have hampered the pursuit of racial-diversity efforts in higher education, motivating many institutions to seek race-neutral alternatives. This steady shift away from race-conscious diversity policies and programs (Hirschman & Berrey, 2017) has culminated in the recent Supreme Court ban on race-based affirmative action at colleges and universities across the country (*SFFA. v. Harvard*, 2023). Striking down a decades-long precedent (for a review, see Arcidiacono et al., 2015), the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) ruled that schools could no longer consider race as one of numerous other factors in their admissions decisions. Extant research on prior state-level bans indicates that, when race-based affirmative action is prohibited, schools become particularly fearful of legal action taken against their existing diversity efforts, and administrators report feeling generally disempowered to address racial issues on campus (Garces & Bilyalov, 2019; Garces & Cogburn, 2015). Indeed, many schools turn to race-neutral (e.g., SES-based) diversity efforts to avoid any possible litigation (Garces & Bilyalov, 2019). Thus, as schools across the country respond to the legal constraints imposed by the SCOTUS decision—and likely also the

vocal public opposition to race-based diversity efforts (Asmelash, 2023)—it is very likely that a broader pivot to SES-based diversity efforts will occur (Hill et al., 2023).

Given the implications of the prior two chapters and the practical realities regarding diversity efforts in higher education, the aim of this chapter is to examine the relative psychosocial impact of SES- versus racial-diversity efforts on underrepresented racial/ethnic minority (URM) students. In addition to having practical implications for an institution's operations, diversity initiatives also have signaling implications in that they affect people's impressions of the institution, and the people and culture embedded therein (Dover et al., 2020). Previous scholars have theorized that turning to SES-based diversity efforts implicitly signals an institution's belief that racial disadvantage is no longer relevant (Bridges, 2016). Such a signal could be expected to harm URM students, but no empirical research (to my knowledge) has investigated these impacts. This is a critical absence to fill given that, with no data on how different diversity approaches affect the well-being of URM students, institutions are limited in their ability to actively support their URM students. Thus, the current chapter moves beyond diversity rationales and looks to the broader trend of prioritizing SES diversity. Note, this research should not be misunderstood as saying that SES diversity should not be *a* priority; rather, I contend that SES diversity should not be *the only* priority to the point that it supplants efforts to support URM students of all SES backgrounds.

There are a number of routes by which emphasizing SES diversity over racial diversity could detrimentally impact URM students psychosocially. First, URM students may view schools as prioritizing and catering to White students, and simultaneously deprioritizing URM students. Not only could this make URM students feel ignored and invalidated, but it could also stoke concerns about being in the numerical minority on campus and not finding same-race

peers. Second, given that it is a more race-neutral form of diversity, SES diversity could foster a general campus-wide blindness to racial differences and experiences. Finally, to the extent that it is interpreted as a dismissal of racial diversity, an emphasis on SES diversity would likely reduce URM students' anticipated feelings of belonging and negatively impact their perceptions of the school overall. The following sections examines extant literature pertaining to each of these effects.

Presumed Beneficiaries

Much of the previous research on prioritizing SES diversity in higher education has primarily looked at how switching to SES-based affirmative action affects URM-student enrollment numbers. Summarizing across a range of studies that have examined state- and institution-level cases as well as simulated national data, Kidder (2016) concludes that using SES is not a workable alternative to using race in admissions decisions at selective schools, if the purpose is to create a racially diverse student body. According to a study by Reardon and colleagues (2018), even though URM students are disproportionately overrepresented in the population of students who are low-income, SES is still not a one-to-one substitute for race. Numerically, there are more low-SES White students than Black or Latinx ones, meaning that race-neutral SES-based policies will still draw more White students (Kidder, 2016). There is some research indicating that only under very specific conditions could SES be used in place of race to produce equivalent levels of racial diversity; however, these conclusions are always qualified by an acknowledgement of how expensive this would be (Levine & Reber, 2023; Reardon et al., 2018). In one study, the conditions necessary to produce equivalent levels of racial diversity were described as "upending the selective college admissions system as we know

it" (Carnevale et al., 2023, p. 12). Taken together, research on replacing race-based affirmative action with class-based affirmative action suggests URM-student enrollment would drop.

But this research fails to capture whether or not URM students anticipate this will be the case, or how they feel about it when they do. Though no studies (to my knowledge) have tested this exact question, there is other relevant literature from which to draw. For example, Browman and Destin (2016) demonstrated that low-SES participants who read university materials suggesting a "chilly climate" toward SES diversity (i.e., disregarding the unique needs of lower-SES students) anticipated a lower percentage of low-SES students on campus than those who read university materials suggesting a "warm climate" toward SES diversity. Additionally, Kirby and colleagues (2024) found that LGBTQ+ participants expected a lower percentage of LGBTQ+ employees at a company that expressed an identity-blind approach to diversity (i.e., celebrating similarities and commonality) in its company philosophy, compared to one that expressed an identity-conscious approach (i.e., celebrating differences and inclusivity). Evidently, institutional values and discourse can prompt minoritized individuals to anticipate underrepresentation of their ingroup. And in both studies, expectations of ingroup underrepresentation were associated with lower feelings of fit and belonging at the organization (Browman & Destin, 2016; Kirby et al., 2024). Thus, on a practical level, the ban on race-based affirmative action will likely shrink the proportion of URM students on many campuses, while on a psychological level, schools' growing emphasis on race-neutral (i.e., SES) diversity could simultaneously heighten fears of URM underrepresentation.

Campus Culture

Another potential concern associated with prioritizing SES diversity is that, by emphasizing a more race-neutral form of diversity, schools will promote a campus culture of

colorblindness—that is, the sense that racial categories do not and should not matter (Plaut, 2010)—thereby disregarding the racialized experiences of URM students. When White individuals hold or are exposed to colorblind ideologies, this has been shown to harm intergroup relations (Leslie & Flynn, 2022). For example, previous research has consistently found an association between colorblindness and insensitivity to racial inequality. Students exposed to a colorblind racial ideology are more oblivious to instances of racial discrimination than those exposed to a multicultural ideology (Apfelbaum et al., 2010). Colorblindness also worsens White individuals' behavior toward URM peers (Leslie & Flynn, 2022; Trawalter et al., 2016). Holoien and Shelton (2012) found that White participants exposed to a colorblind (vs. a multicultural) racial diversity ideology exhibited more racially prejudiced nonverbal and verbal behavior toward URM interaction partners, for example, devaluing the importance of racial issues during their conversations. In turn, the URM interaction partners demonstrated poorer performance on a cognitive task post-interaction. Thus, if racial diversity is deemphasized in place of SES diversity, this may strengthen White students' predilection for colorblindness (Rattan & Ambady, 2013), leading them to engage with their URM classmates in invalidating or disrespectful ways.

The SCOTUS ban on race-based affirmative action has likely already worsened White individuals' relationships to and treatment of their URM students and classmates. Policies, especially those pertaining to anti-discrimination and equal rights, act as normative signals that can alter behavior and moral attitudes (Bilz & Nadler, 2014). In a test of this, Bowman Williams (2017) examined the effect of reminding White participants about the legal requirements against racial discrimination, versus reminding them about the instrumental benefits of diversity or not giving them a reminder at all. She found that the legal cue (compared to the other two

conditions) not only improved participants' perceptions of organizational diversity efforts, but also increased their likelihood of selecting a Black candidate over a White one in a workplace promotion scenario. Thus, anti-discrimination policies may remind majority-group members of egalitarian norms regarding the treatment of minority-group members, while the absence of such policies may weaken some of the social barriers against racial bias.

Previous work on state-level affirmative action bans corroborates this notion. In one study, Black and Latinx students in California–which banned race-based affirmative action in 1996–reported lower levels of respect on campus toward students of their same race, compared to those at similar schools in states with affirmative action still intact (Kidder, 2012). In another study, students attending schools in states with race-based affirmative action bans reported experiencing overt racism on campus at nearly twice the rate as students in states without a ban (43.4% vs. 20.9%; Bowen, 2010). These findings offer insight into how the current political climate toward racial diversity might play out. Moreover, schools that respond by not reaffirming their commitment to racial diversity or by overemphasizing race-neutral forms of diversity (i.e., SES diversity) will likely exacerbate this general inattentiveness to racial inequality.

Anticipated Feelings

Finally, emphasizing SES diversity over racial diversity could reduce URM students' sense of belonging and increase their sense of threat. Previous research has shown that members of low-status or underrepresented groups are particularly attuned to environmental cues that signal their devaluation (e.g., Gündemir et al., 2019). The emphasis on SES diversity could act as one such cue. URM individuals strongly associate their ingroup with the concept of diversity; Black and Latinx Americans are more likely to think about Black and Latinx individuals when considering "diversity" than they are to think about White or Asian individuals (Unzueta &

Binning, 2010). Thus, defining diversity in a way that does not explicitly reference race or only weakly implies URM individuals could spur feelings of exclusion. Previous research has found that when organizations define diversity broadly—that is, when they focus on diversity of perspectives and skills—people of color perceive this as a dilution of diversity, and are less interested in working at these organizations compared to other organizations (Kirby et al., 2023). University framing of diversity has indeed broadened over time (Glasener et al., 2019), and will likely continue as institutions contend with external legal and cultural pressures against racial diversity. To the extent that emphasizing SES diversity is part of this trend, it will likely be perceived as a weaker commitment to URM students than will an emphasis on racial diversity.

Furthermore, an emphasis on SES diversity may also foster negative feelings among URM individuals via perceptions regarding the prior two effects, that is, how much schools will prioritize outgroup versus ingroup members and how pervasive colorblindness is. First, concerns of underrepresentation have well-documented negative effects on minority-group members. For example, women in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) context indicated lower belonging and higher threat when it featured a 3:1 ratio of men to women, compared to when it featured a balanced gender ratio (Murphy et al., 2007). Additionally, when Black participants view organizational diversity material that features only photos of White employees, they report lower organizational fit and authenticity than when there is a mix of White and Black employees. This holds regardless of whether the organization expresses pro-diversity values or not (Wilton et al., 2020). Thus, if URM students feel White students will be prioritized under a diversity policy that emphasizes SES over race, they may expect to feel that higher education is not a place for "people like them" after all.

Second, the perception that an organization holds identity-blind ideologies has been shown to worsen minority-group members' attitudes toward the organization. Wilton and colleagues (2015), for example, found that women of color who read a university diversity statement that espoused colorblind ideas by calling race, ethnicity, gender, and religion "immaterial" on campus experienced social identity threat; participants both expected to and actually did perform worse on a math test compared to those who read a multicultural diversity statement that affirmed the importance of demographic differences. Additionally, Kirby and colleagues (2024) found that LGBTQ+ participants reported less belonging and perceptions of fairness, and a lower willingness to disclose their identities, in organizations that espoused identity-blindness versus ones that espoused identity-consciousness. Thus, promoting only SES diversity without similarly promoting racial diversity may harm URM students' sense of comfort and belonging to the extent they perceive this as an endorsement of colorblindness or a denial of racial disadvantage.

The Role of Social Identity

Much of the above theorizing assumes that students view institutional diversity signals through the lens of their racial identities, rather than one of their many other social identities. This assumption is in line with the *ethnic-prominence hypothesis* (Levin et al., 2002). That is, racial/ethnic minorities should be more perceptive of discrimination based on their race/ethnicity than based on any of their other disadvantaged identities. That said, attunement to discrimination hinges on many factors, one of which is identity strength. The more Black individuals see their racial identities as important and central to who they are, the more aware they are of racial discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). This holds for SES as well; individuals who rate their SES identity as being more important are likewise more conscious of classism (Graham-Bailey

et al., 2019). With that in mind, given that many URM students in higher education are simultaneously low-SES (Taylor & Turk, 2019), it is important to consider how the strength of their racial and SES identities might impact their reactions to diversity policies. While I presume that even low-SES URM students will feel less supported by SES-diversity efforts than racial-diversity efforts due to the prominence of their racial identity (Levin et al., 2002), this may not hold if they identify strongly with their SES identity. Social identity is flexible and context-dependent (e.g., Destin & Debrosse, 2017), and intersections of race and SES often produce complex effects that are more than or entirely distinct from the independent effects of race and SES (Castillo-Lavergne & Destin, 2019; Graham-Bailey et al., 2019; Whitcomb et al., 2021) (Graham-Bailey et al., 2019). Thus, it remains an open question how the personal importance of URM students' SES and racial identities shape their responses to universities' diversity approaches.

Chapter Overview

The current chapter aims to fill these knowledge gaps and examine URM individuals' attitudes toward diversity programs that prioritize SES over race. Given the novelty of the research, only Black individuals were sampled in an effort to control for the effect of race. Study 3.1 serves as a pilot to test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Black individuals will anticipate a) lower ingroup representation, b) greater colorblindness, and c) more negative feelings at a university that prioritizes SES diversity compared to one that promotes racial diversity.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Participants' negative feelings will be mediated by anticipated ingroup representation and expected colorblindness.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The differences in participants' anticipated feelings at a school prioritizing SES diversity versus racial diversity will be moderated by their subjective SES and racial identification.

Study 3.2 replicates Study 3.1 with updated stimuli based on the results from the pilot. In addition, the study includes White participants to provide a comparison to the Black sample. Of primary interest is White participants' reported colorblindness, as this offers insight into the social and cultural environment URM students might encounter.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): White individuals will report greater colorblindness at a university that prioritizes SES diversity compared to one that promotes racial diversity.

Study 3.1

Study 3.1 was a pilot to establish the effects and assess which stimuli to use in subsequent research. In the study, participants read a diversity statement that either emphasized SES diversity, racial diversity, or an undefined form of diversity, and then they responded to a series of questions assessing the outcomes of interest. Moreover, two versions of the diversity statements were compared, one that mentioned the SCOTUS decision and one that did not. Given that many recent SES-diversity efforts have been a response to the affirmative action ban, it seemed important to disentangle whether mentioning or not mentioning the ban changed participants' perceptions of SES diversity. Acknowledging the ban might indicate the school is still committed to racial diversity but must contend with legal constraints, while not acknowledging it might indicate a school's intrinsic desire to promote SES diversity irrespective of legal constraints. Additionally, participants might question the validity of the diversity efforts if the school did not acknowledge that it must work within the limits of the affirmative action ban.

Methods

Participants

A total of 476 Black-identifying Americans were recruited via the online survey platform Prolific. A power analysis using a small-to-medium effect size ($f = 0.15$) for a 2 X 3 design indicated needing 432 participants to achieve 80% power. Based on the expected removal of around 10% of participants, the recruitment goal was set at 475 participants. A total of 32 participants were removed based on the following exclusion criteria: identifying as a race other than Black (or a combination of races that did not include Black), indicating answering randomly, spending more than 3 *SD* greater than the mean completion time on the study, or failing more than one attention check. The final sample consisted of 444 participants (M_{age} = 40.44, SD_{age} = 12.37; cisgender men = 48.87%, cisgender women = 50.00%, non-binary/other = 1.13%). The pattern of results is nearly identical with all participants included.

Procedure

Participants were recruited in October 2023. After indicating their consent, participants were randomly assigned to read one of six university diversity statements. The study had a 3 (diversity type: SES, race, ambiguous) X 2 (SCOTUS: mentioned vs. absent) between-subjects design.

In the SCOTUS-mentioned condition, participants read the following statement:

> In light of the recent Supreme Court decision, University X is reaffirming its commitment to diversity as an essential component of a vibrant academic community. While working within the constraints imposed by the decision, we will continue to cultivate an inclusive environment by supporting [first-generation and lower-income students / underrepresented racial and ethnic minority students / students from different backgrounds, identities, and beliefs] during their time on campus. By focusing on the [socioeconomic diversity of our campus / racial and ethnic diversity of our campus / many forms diversity can take on our campus], we aim to make University X a place where students can reach their full potential. In short, [socioeconomic / racial and ethnic / student] diversity is critical to our university's mission.

In the SCOTUS-absent condition, participants read the following statement:

> At University X, we embrace diversity as an essential component of a vibrant and inclusive academic community. In particular, we are dedicated to cultivating a [socioeconomically diverse / racially and ethnically diverse / diverse] campus that is supportive of [first-generation and lower-income students / underrepresented racial and ethnic minority students / students with different backgrounds, identities, and beliefs]. We are committed to making University X a place where students [of all socioeconomic backgrounds / of all racial and ethnic backgrounds / holding any background, identity, or beliefs] can reach their full potential. In short, [socioeconomic / racial and ethnic / student] diversity is critical to our university's mission.

Participants then answered a series of questions regarding their opinions and perceptions of the school whose diversity statement they just read, as well as a number of questions about their own identities and attitudes about diversity in higher education. These measures were presented in order in which they are discussed below.[7] Finally, participants answered a set of demographic questions.

Measures

Positivity. Participants' positivity toward the school was measured using their average responses to the following four questions: "To what extent do you support this university's stance on diversity?", "How much do you like the statement above?", "How much do you agree with the statement above?", and "To what extent would you want to attend this school?" (α = .93). Participants indicated their responses on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *A great deal*).

Well-being. Participant's expected belonging and comfort at the university was measured by adapting five items from Purdie-Vaughns et al.'s (2008) measure of *trust and comfort*: "To what extent do you think you could 'be yourself' at a school like this?", "Do you think you would be treated fairly by faculty and staff at this school?", "Do you think you could trust the

[7] An exploratory measure was also included to assess the extent to which participants felt SES- and racial-diversity efforts in higher education are mutually exclusive and zero-sum. Exploratory analysis with this measure did not yield interpretable results and are thus not reported.

administration at this school to treat you fairly?", "How similar do you think your values and this school's values are?", and "To what extent would the environment at this school inspire you to do the very best job that you can?". Two items adapted from Hurtado and Carter's (1997) measure of *belonging* were also included: "To what extent would you feel that you are a member of the campus community?" and "To what extent would you feel a sense of belonging to the campus community?". Responses from the seven items were averaged together to create a general measure of well-being ($\alpha = .96$). Participants indicated their responses on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *A great deal*).

Social Identity Threat. Participants' perceived threat at the university was measured with three items adapted from Starck et al.'s (2021) social identity threat scale: "To what extent is this university a place where most other students would judge you because of your race/ethnicity?", "When interacting with other students at this university, to what extent do you think they would interpret all of your behaviors in terms of your race/ethnicity?", and "To what extent do you think stereotypes about your race/ethnicity would affect your experience at this school?" ($\alpha = .91$). Participants indicated their responses on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *A great deal*).

Perceived Colorblindness. Participants indicated the extent to which they expected other students to disregard racial issues by answering four items adapted from the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (Neville et al., 2000) as they expected "other students at this school" would complete it: "Racism may have been a problem in the past, but it is not an important problem today", "Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as White people in the U.S." (reverse-coded), "White people in the U.S. have certain advantages because of the color of their skin" (reverse-coded), and "Racial problems in the U.S. are rare, isolated situations" ($\alpha =$

.82). Participants indicated their responses on a 0 (*Other students would strongly disagree*) to 100 (*Other students would strongly agree*) sliding scale. Higher values indicate greater perceived colorblindness.

Presumed Beneficiaries. To examine participants' perceptions of which students they thought would be prioritized as a result of each school's efforts, participants were asked "To what extent do you think the university is committed to supporting the following students?" with regard to the following seven items: "White students", "Black students", "Latino/a/x students", "Asian students", "Low-income students", "Wealthier students", and "Students with different personality traits and expertise". Participants indicated their responses on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *A great deal*). Of primary interest were participants' perceived support toward "Black students" and toward "White students"—that is, their racial ingroup and the most prominent racial outgroup, respectively.

Social Identification. To test for moderation by participants' subjective social identification, the two items from Purdie-Vaughns et al.'s (2008) measure of racial identity were adapted: "How important is your racial/ethnic identity to you?" (1 = *Not at all important*, 7 = *Very important*) and "My racial/ethnic identity is important to how I view myself" (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*; $\alpha = .93$). These items were repeated for SES identity with "racial/ethnic" replaced by "social class" ($\alpha = .93$). Subjective social status was also assessed using the 10-point MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler et al., 2000).

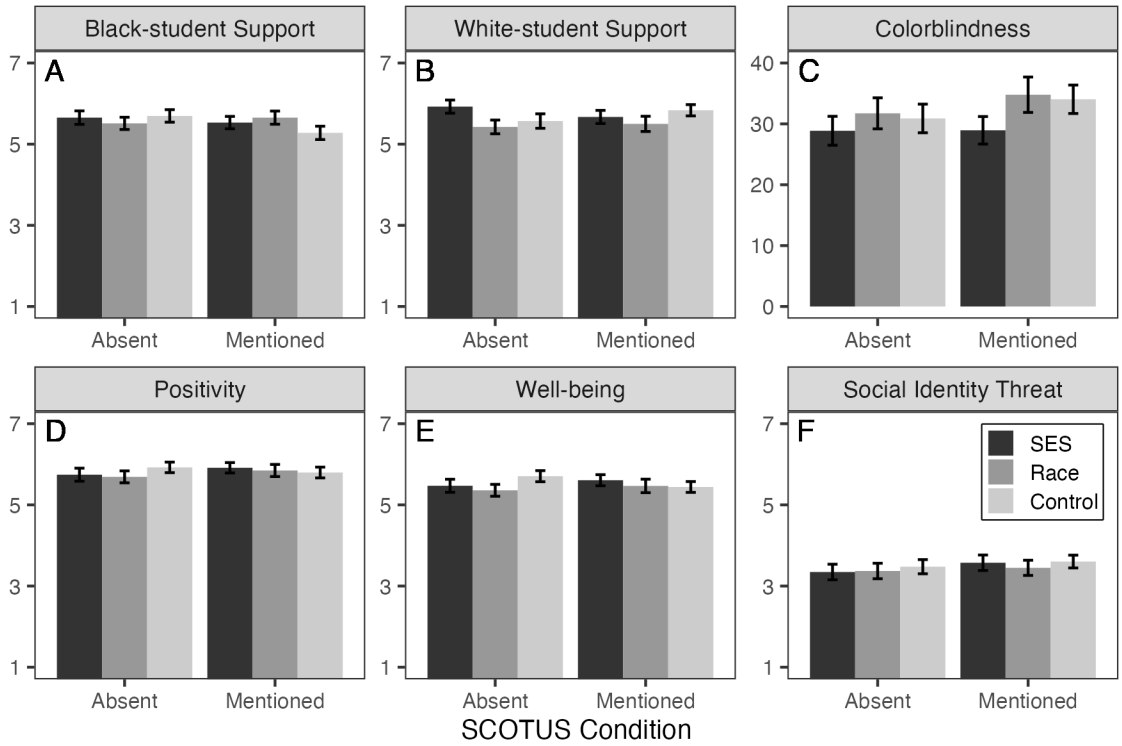
Results

To test whether participants' opinions and perceptions of each school differed by the content of the diversity statement they read, the same model was run for each outcome. A 3 (diversity type: SES, race, ambiguous) X 2 (SCOTUS: mentioned vs. absent) ANOVA was run

via the lm function in R. Sum-to-zero contrasts were used for both variables (SCOTUS absent = 1, SCOTUS mentioned = -1; two contrasts for diversity type where ambiguous diversity = -1). Significant effects were determined by *p*-values based on Type 3 tests using Kenward-Roger approximation for degrees of freedom, as implemented in the Anova function of the package car (Fox & Weisberg, 2019). Significant interactions were then examined by running post-hoc pairwise comparisons using the emmeans function with Tukey adjustments for multiple comparisons (Lenth et al., 2021). The full set of results is depicted in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

Means and SEs of Different Outcomes Measured in Study 3.1



Note. SES = socioeconomic status.

Presumed Beneficiaries

First, participants' perceptions about the supposed beneficiaries were examined—that is, how the type of diversity they read about influenced whom they imagined benefitting,

specifically focusing on the degree to which they thought Black students (i.e., their racial ingroup) or White students (i.e., the dominant racial outgroup) benefited.

Black Students. With regard to perceived support to Black students, results revealed no main effects of either diversity type, $F(2, 438) = 0.290$, $p = .748$, or SCOTUS, $F(1, 438) = 0.793$, $p = .374$. There was also no significant interaction between the two, $F(2, 438) = 0.932$, $p = .395$. An exploration of the pairwise comparisons revealed no significant differences between any of the conditions, all ps > .300, see panel A of Figure 3.1.

White Students. With regard to perceived support to White students, results revealed no main effects of either diversity type, $F(2, 438) = 1.764$, $p = .173$, or SCOTUS, $F(1, 438) = 0.028$, $p = .867$. There was also no significant interaction between the two, $F(2, 438) = 1.125$, $p = .326$. An exploration of the pairwise comparisons revealed no significant differences between any of the conditions, all ps > .184, see panel B of Figure 3.1.

Though not of primary interest, this same pattern of results emerged when assessing perceived support to Latino/a/x students and Asian students.

In other words, in contrast to *H1*, participants did not distinguish between the six conditions regarding the extent to which the schools would differentially support students from different racial groups.

Perceived Campus Culture

Next, participants' perceptions about colorblindness on campus were examined, specifically how these perceptions differed as a function of the diversity type emphasized in the statement they read. Results revealed no main effects of either diversity type, $F(2, 438) = 1.220$, $p = .296$, or SCOTUS, $F(1, 438) = 0.811$, $p = .368$. There was also no significant interaction between the two, $F(2, 438) = 0.389$, $p = .678$. An exploration of the pairwise comparisons

revealed no significant differences between any of the conditions, all *p*s > .295, see panel C of Figure 3.1. In other words, in contrast to *H1*, participants did not feel the schools differed in the extent to which they would harbor a colorblind culture.

Anticipated Feelings

Finally, participants' general feelings about each school were examined, specifically how these feelings differed as a function of the diversity type emphasized in the statement they read.

Positivity. Results revealed no main effects of either diversity type, $F(2, 438) = 0.221$, $p = .802$, or SCOTUS, $F(1, 438) = 0.673$, $p = .412$. There was also no significant interaction between the two, $F(2, 438) = 0.289$, $p = .749$. An exploration of the pairwise comparisons revealed no significant differences between any of the conditions, all *p*s > .381, see panel D of Figure 3.1.

Well-being. Results revealed no main effects of either diversity type, $F(2, 438) = 0.667$, $p = .514$, or SCOTUS, $F(1, 438) = 0.016$, $p = .899$. There was also no significant interaction between the two, $F(2, 438) = 0.764$, $p = .467$. An exploration of the pairwise comparisons revealed no significant differences between any of the conditions, all *p*s > .297, see panel E of Figure 3.1.

Social Identity Threat. Results revealed no main effects of either diversity type, $F(2, 438) = 0.409$, $p = .665$, or SCOTUS, $F(1, 438) = 0.504$, $p = .478$. There was also no significant interaction between the two, $F(2, 438) = 0.128$, $p = .880$. An exploration of the pairwise comparisons revealed no significant differences between any of the conditions, all *p*s > .497, see panel F of Figure 3.1.

In other words, in contrast to *H1*, participants did not distinguish between the six conditions with respect to their feelings toward the different schools.

Given the lack of effects for ingroup/outcome benefit, perceived colorblindness, and anticipated feelings, it was unnecessary to run a mediation to test *H2*.

Moderation. Despite the null effects for anticipated feelings, it is possible this is concealing differences between subsets of the sample. Thus, in a test of *H3*, the analyses were re-run to examine moderation by participants' subjective social identification. In separate models, an interaction term was included for either SES identification, subjective social status, or racial identification. Each potential moderator was centered at the sample mean. Significant interactions were examined by running post-hoc pairwise comparisons within each SCOTUS condition at 1 *SD* above and below the mean. Given the theoretical interest in investigating whether the two SCOTUS conditions produced different reactions to the diversity statements, in the absence of a significant three-way interaction the diversity type X moderator interaction was still tested separately for those in the SCOTUS-mentioned condition and those in the SCOTUS-absent condition.[8]

As a preliminary analysis, a 3 (diversity type: SES, race, ambiguous) X 2 (SCOTUS: mentioned vs. absent) ANOVA was run on all three measures of social identification. None of the effects were significant, all *p*s > .115, nor were any of the post-hoc pairwise comparisons, all *p*s > .122. This suggests the different stimuli did not change participants' social identification. The correlations between the three measures were also examined. SES identification was positively correlated with both subjective social status ($r = 0.24$, $p < .001$) and racial identification ($r = 0.46$, $p < .001$). Racial identification and subjective social status were modestly positively correlated ($r = 0.09$, $p = .047$).

[8] Given the smaller sample size from splitting the data, results from subsample models were verified by recalculating the test statistics using the mean sum of squares and degrees of freedom from the larger model. This process confirmed the pattern of results reported in the text.

The full detailed results are reported in Appendix G. Taken together, there were no consistent patterns that would indicate support for *H3*. In general, there were only main effects of social identification, such that the stronger participants identified with their SES or race, the more positively they felt toward diversity. This, however, did not differ by the specific kind of diversity in question. There was some indication that, when the recent affirmative action ban is not mentioned, participants high in racial identification expected more well-being at the ambiguous-diversity school (vs. the SES- or racial-diversity schools), and participants low in racial identification felt less threat at the SES-diversity school (vs. the ambiguous-diversity school). However, these findings should be interpreted with caution given the lack of a significant three-way interaction in the model.

Discussion

In a pilot study of Black Americans online, there was little indication that participants differentiated between schools that discussed diversity in terms of SES, race, or an undefined form of diversity. This held both whether the diversity statement did or did not mention the recent SCOTUS decision banning race-based affirmative action. Further analyses revealed that the effects were not markedly moderated by participants' social identification; in general, the more strongly participants identified with their race or SES, the more positivity they reported and the greater well-being they expected toward the school in question.

Though null results are difficult to interpret, the analysis of the presumed-beneficiary items suggests the conditions may not have sufficiently distinguished between the different diversity types, and thus participants may have interpreted all schools as being equally supportive of their ingroup. Thus, Study 3.2 sought to strengthen the stimuli to emphasize the particular diversity type in question more explicitly.

Study 3.2

The overarching goal of Study 3.2 was to determine whether the null findings reported above are substantiated or whether they were a result of the specific stimuli. First, the SCOTUS-mentioned condition was removed, as this posed a potential confound such that participants might have responded based on the perceived legality of the diversity policy in question, rather than based on their true feelings regarding the policy. Second, the language and overall tone were strengthened in an effort to reinforce the emphasis on the particular diversity type in question. Third, the control condition was modified so as to not refer to demographic diversity per se, in the hopes this would provide a better baseline for the outcome variables. It is possible that the null effects found in the previous study arose from the fact that any mention of diversity boosts positive attitudes toward the school in question. Thus, if there are no differences between the three conditions even when the control condition does not mention demographic diversity, this might speak to weaknesses in the manipulation.

Study 3.2 also introduced a sample of White Americans. This allows for a test of *H4*, to see if exposing White participants to SES diversity changes their reported colorblindness. Additionally, the White sample would provide a comparison to the Black sample, to see if and how White participants' interpretations of the diversity statements differed from those of Black participants. Lastly, null effects in the White sample as well might further indicate that the manipulations were not realistic.

Methods

Participants

A total of 475 Black-identifying Americans and 476 White-identifying Americans were recruited via the online survey platform Prolific. A power analysis using a small-to-medium

effect size ($f = 0.15$) for a 3-factor design indicated needing 432 participants to achieve 80% power. Based on the expected removal of about 10% of participants, the recruitment goal was set at 475 participants per sample. In the Black sample, a total of 30 participants were removed based on the same exclusion criteria as in Study 3.1. In the White sample, a total of 25 participants were removed for the same exclusion criteria (with the exception that participants had to self-report as monoracially White). The final Black sample consisted of 445 participants ($M_{age} = 37.18$, $SD_{age} = 11.85$; cisgender men = 45.84%, cisgender women = 52.36%, non-binary/other = 1.80%) and the final White sample consisted of 451 participants ($M_{age} = 41.01$, $SD_{age} = 13.52$; cisgender men = 49.22%, cisgender women = 49.00%, non-binary/other = 1.77%). The pattern of results reported below is largely similar with all participants included.

Procedure

Participants were recruited in November and December 2023. Study 3.2 followed the same basic design as Study 3.1. However, unlike the previous study, only one between-subjects factor was manipulated (diversity type: SES, race, academic). After indicating their consent, participants were randomly assigned to read one of three university diversity statements. In the SES- and racial-diversity conditions, the statement read as follows:

> Here at University X, we are strengthening our efforts to cultivate a [socioeconomically / racially/ethnically] diverse campus. As part of our Strategic Plan for Diversity, we will direct more resources expressly toward supporting [first-generation and lower-income / underrepresented racial/ethnic minority] students in the coming years. While we understand there are many kinds of diversity that can be pursued, we feel that, **now more than ever, it is imperative that we commit ourselves specifically to [socioeconomic / racial/ethnic] diversity**. University X should be a place where [first-generation and lower-income / underrepresented racial/ethnic minority] students from any background, identity, or social category can reach their full potential.

The control condition, which focused on non-demographic (i.e., academic) diversity, read as follows:

> Here at University X, we are strengthening our efforts to cultivate an academically diverse campus. As part of our new Strategic Plan, we will direct more resources toward supporting diverse lines of research in the coming years. While we recognize that this university provides many different services and has various missions, **we are particularly excited about fostering academic diversity across our campus community in innovative and creative ways**. University X should be a place where students and faculty with a variety of passions, ideas, and interests can pursue them to the fullest.

Note, the bolded font was present in the actual text participants read. Participants then answered the same series of questions as in the previous study.

Measures

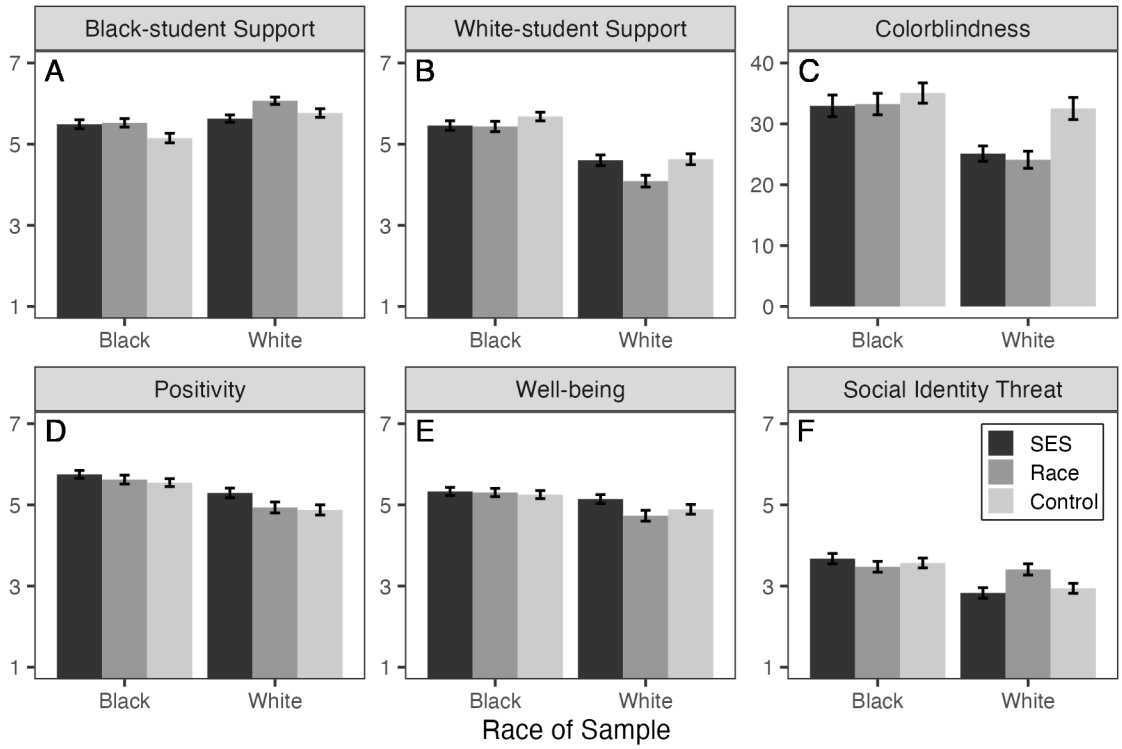
Participants responded to the same measures as in Study 3.1, with the following exception: In the White sample, the measure of perceived colorblindness asked about "*the typical student* attending this school", with the scale endpoints going from 1 (*The typical student would strongly disagree*) to 7 (*The typical student would strongly agree*). Although the intent was to assess changes in participants' own self-reported colorblindness in response to the different conditions, "the typical student" was used in an effort to reduce social-desirability concerns.

Results

To test whether participants' opinions and perceptions of each school differed by the content of the diversity statement they read, a 3 (diversity type: SES, race, academic) X 2 (sample: Black, White) ANOVA was run for each individual outcome. All the same model specifications as in Study 3.1 were used. Based on the prior results, there is a high likelihood of null effects across the three diversity types among Black participants, which could make it difficult for the interaction to reach significance. With that in mind, since the purpose of this study is to understand the differences between Black and White participants, the interaction was still unpacked regardless of significance by running post-hoc pairwise comparisons. The full set of results is depicted in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2

Means and SEs of Different Outcomes Measured in Study 3.2



Note. SES = socioeconomic status.

Presumed Beneficiaries

Black Students. To start, participants' perceptions of the extent to which each school would support Black students were examined, see panel A of Figure 3.2. Results revealed a significant main effect of diversity type, $F(2, 890) = 5.951$, $p = .003$, and a main effect of sample, $F(2, 890) = 29.284$, $p < .001$. These, however, were qualified by a marginally significant interaction, $F(2, 890) = 2.537$, $p = .080$.

This marginally significant interaction was unpacked first to examine differences between the three conditions within each sample. This indicated that Black participants felt the racial-diversity condition ($M = 5.51$, $SD = 1.32$) was more supportive of Black students than the control condition ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.47$), $t(890) = 2.628$, $p = .024$. Additionally, the SES-

diversity condition (M = 5.44, SD = 1.41) was seen as marginally more supportive of Black students than the control condition, $t(890) = 2.178$, $p = .076$. There was, however, no difference between the racial-diversity condition and the SES-diversity condition in terms of perceived support toward Black students, $p = .896$.

Among the White participants, the racial-diversity condition (M = 6.08, SD = 1.12) was seen as more supportive of Black students than the SES-diversity condition (M = 5.64, SD = 1.14), $t(890) = 2.926$, $p = .010$. The racial-diversity condition was also seen as marginally more supportive of Black students than the control condition (M = 5.76, SD = 1.34), $t(890) = 2.122$, $p = .086$. There was, however, no difference between the SES-diversity condition and the control condition in terms of perceived support toward Black students, $p = .705$.

The interaction was also unpacked the other way, that is, to examine differences between the two samples. This revealed that White participants' perceptions support to Black students at the racial-diversity school, $t(890) = 3.754$, $p < .001$, and at the control school, $t(890) = 4.301$, $p < .001$, were both higher than Black participants' perceptions thereof. Only with regard to the SES-diversity school were White and Black participants equal in their perceived support for Black students, $p = .189$.

White Students. Next, participants' perceptions of the extent to which each school would support White students were examined, see panel B of Figure 3.2. Results revealed a significant main effect of diversity type, $F(2, 890) = 4.045$, $p = .018$, and a main effect of sample, $F(1, 890) = 113.106$, $p < .001$. There was, however, no significant interaction between the two, $F(2, 890) = 2.044$, $p = .130$.

Despite the non-significant interaction, pairwise comparisons were again run within each sample. This analysis indicated that Black participants did not perceive any differences between the three conditions in terms of support for White students, all *p*s > .465.

Meanwhile, for White participants, the racial-diversity condition ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 1.84$) was perceived to be less focused on White students than both the SES-diversity condition ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 1.64$), $t(890) = -2.783$, $p = .015$, and the control condition ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.70$), $t(890) = -2.830$, $p = .013$. There was no difference between the SES-diversity condition and the control condition, $p = .998$.

Again, the data were parsed the other way to be able to examine differences between the two samples. This analysis revealed that, across all three conditions, White participants felt the schools would be less supportive of White students than Black participants did, all *p*s < .001.

Overall, examining whom participants presumed would benefit at each school indicated that Black participants did not differentiate between the three schools regarding support for White students. However, contrary to *H1*, Black participants did feel that the racial-diversity school and the SES-diversity school were both particularly supportive of Black students. Meanwhile, for White participants, the racial-diversity school stood out from the other two schools; that is, White participants found the racial-diversity school to be uniquely supportive of Black students and unsupportive of White students.

Perceived Campus Culture

Examining participants' perceptions of the extent to which each school would foster a colorblind culture on campus, results revealed a main effect of diversity type, $F(2, 889) = 5.904$, $p = .003$, and a main effect of sample, $F(1, 889) = 28.506$, $p < .001$. There was no significant interaction between the two, $F(2, 889) = 1.220$, $p = .296$, see panel C of Figure 3.2.

Despite the non-significant interaction, responses were again examined separately by sample. This revealed that, in the Black sample, there were no significant differences between any of the conditions, all *p*s > .432.

In the White sample, participants expected greater colorblindness at the control school (M = 31.36, SD = 22.00) compared to at the SES-diversity school (M = 24.80, SD = 15.86), $t(889) = 2.807$, $p = .014$, and also compared to at the racial-diversity school (M = 23.67, SD = 17.50), $t(889) = 3.267$, $p = .003$. White participants expected the same level of colorblindness at the SES- and racial-diversity schools, $p = .879$.

Parsing the data the other way to examine differences between the two samples indicated that, at each of the three schools, Black participants expected greater colorblindness than White participants, all *p*s < .068.

In short, these results indicate that Black Americans expected equivalent—and also higher, relative to White participants—levels of colorblindness across the three schools. This did not support *H1*, though it did replicate Study 3.1. Meanwhile, though contrary to *H4*, White Americans thought that the culture of colorblindness at the SES-diversity school and the racial-diversity school would be the same. This was, however, distinct from the perceived colorblindness at the control school, suggesting that White participants thought that schools which are committed to demographic (i.e., SES and racial) diversity would foster relatively lower colorblindness than schools which are committed to non-demographic (i.e., academic) diversity.

Anticipated Feelings

Positivity. Examining participants' reported positivity toward each school, results revealed a main effect of diversity type, $F(2, 890) = 4.147$, $p = .016$, and a main effect of sample,

$F(1, 890) = 44.306$, $p < .001$. There was no significant interaction between the two, $F(2, 890) = 0.492$, $p = .612$, see panel D of Figure 3.2.

Despite the non-significant interaction, the data were examined separately by sample. This revealed that among Black participants, there were no significant differences between any of the conditions, all ps > .290.

White participants reported greater positivity toward the SES-diversity statement ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.51$) than toward the control statement ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 1.60$), $t(890) = 2.534$, $p = .031$. Neither of the other comparisons reached significance, both ps > .129, though descriptively, White participants reported greater positivity to the SES-diversity statement than to racial-diversity condition ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.69$).

Decomposing the data the other way to examine differences between the two samples revealed that Black participants reported greater positivity than White participants for each of the three statements, all ps < .002.

Well-being. Examining participants' expected well-being at each school revealed a main effect of sample, $F(1, 890) = 17.256$, $p < .001$. There was no effect of diversity type, $F(1, 890) = 1.671$, $p = .189$, nor a significant interaction between the two, $F(2, 890) = 1.610$, $p = .200$, see panel E of Figure 3.2.

Despite the non-significant interaction, looking at responses separately by sample revealed that, among Black participants, there were no significant differences between any of the conditions, all ps > .795.

Meanwhile, White participants reported greater expected well-being at the SES-diversity school ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.39$) than at the racial-diversity school ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.69$), $t(890) = 2.408$, $p = .043$. Neither of the other comparisons reached significance, both ps > .196.

Breaking down the data the other way to examine differences between the two samples revealed that White participants (M = 4.73, SD = 1.69) expected less well-being than Black participants (M = 5.33, SD = 1.24) at the racial-diversity school, $t(890) = -3.667$, $p < .001$. White participants also expected less well-being at the control school (M = 4.84, SD = 1.52) than Black participants (M = 5.22, SD = 1.26), $t(890) = 2.368$, $p = .018$. There was no difference, however, in the expected well-being of White participants (M = 5.12, SD = 1.39) and Black participants (M = 5.30, SD = 1.27) at the SES-diversity school, $p = .251$.

Social Identity Threat. Examining participants' anticipated social identity threat revealed a main effect of sample, $F(1, 890) = 20.648$, $p < .001$. There was also a marginally significant interaction between diversity type and sample, $F(2, 890) = 2.984$, $p = .051$, see panel F of Figure 3.2.

Unpacking the marginally significant interaction revealed that, in the Black sample, there were no significant differences between any of the conditions, all ps > .632.

In the White sample, participants anticipated greater social identity threat at the racial-diversity school (M = 3.33, SD = 1.74) than at the SES-diversity school (M = 2.88, SD = 1.63), $t(890) = 2.381$, $p = .046$. Neither of the other comparisons reached significance, both ps > .140, though descriptively, White participants also anticipated greater social identity threat at the racial-diversity school than at control school (M = 2.97, SD = 1.54).

Unpacking the interaction the other way revealed that, Black participants anticipated higher social identity threat at the SES-diversity school (M = 3.62, SD = 1.61) than White participants did, $t(890) = 3.969$, $p < .001$. Black participants also anticipated greater social identity threat at the control school (M = 3.58, SD = 1.52) than White participants did, $t(890)$ =

3.257, $p = .001$. However, White participants anticipated the same level of social identity threat at the racial-diversity school as Black participants did ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.67$), $p = .508$.

In sum, when looking at participants' anticipated feelings, results revealed that Black participants did not differentiate between the three schools. Again, this did not support *H1*, but it did replicate Study 3.1. White participants' responses, however, seemed to suggest a sense of being disadvantaged under racial diversity, compared to SES diversity. That is, they anticipated greater social identity threat and lower well-being at the racial-diversity school compared to the SES-diversity school. And while the difference in positivity between SES diversity and racial diversity did not reach statistical significance, their positivity for the SES-diversity school was higher than for the control school; this could indicate a difference between more cognitive measures of support (i.e., they agree with racial diversity to the same degree as SES diversity on paper) and more emotional measures of support (i.e., they feel anxious about a school that emphasizes racial diversity).

Additionally, across the board, Black Americans feel more positively about diversity (i.e., greater positivity and expected well-being) than White Americans, but it also seems that they report more social identity threat generally in higher education than White Americans. With that in mind, the fact that White Americans felt the same degree of expected well-being at the SES-diversity school and the same degree of social identity threat at the racial-diversity school as Black Americans further illustrates White American's special inclination for SES diversity and aversion to racial diversity.

Given Black participants' lack of difference between SES diversity and racial diversity in terms of ingroup/outcome benefit, perceived colorblindness, and anticipated feelings, it was unnecessary to run a mediation to test *H2*. Since White participants did indicate differences

between SES diversity and racial diversity on both the outcomes and the proposed mediators, for exploratory purposes, mediation models were run for White participants. These results can be found in Appendix H.

Moderation. Analyses were then run to examine whether the effects on participants' anticipated feelings were moderated by their subjective social identification. To that end, the same models as above were re-run with a three-way interaction term including either SES identification, subjective social status, or racial identification in separate models. Given that the White and Black sample significantly differed in terms of their SES identification (White: M = 3.30, SD = 1.66; Black: M = 4.41, SD = 1.74), $t(890) = 9.806$, $p < .001$, and in terms of their racial identification (White: M = 3.08, SD = 1.71; Black: M = 5.65, SD = 1.55), $t(890) = 23.585$, $p < .001$, the moderators were standardized within each sample at their M and SD prior to analysis. Again, significant three-way interactions were unpacked by examining pairwise comparisons within each sample at low (-1) and high (1) levels of the moderator. Given the theoretical interest in the experiences of people from different racial groups, absent a significant three-way interaction, the diversity type X moderator interaction was still tested separately for White and Black participants.[9]

As a preliminary analysis, a 3 (diversity type: SES, race, ambiguous) X 2 (sample: Black, White) ANOVA was run on all three measures of social identification. Apart from the aforementioned main effect of sample on SES identification and racial identification, none of the effects were significant, all ps > .128, nor were any of the post-hoc pairwise comparisons contrasting the different conditions within each sample, all ps > .121. This suggests the stimuli

[9] Given the smaller sample size from splitting the data, results from subsample models were verified by recalculating the test statistics using the mean sum of squares and degrees of freedom from the larger model. This process confirmed the pattern of results reported in the text.

did not change participants' social identification. The correlations between the three measures were also examined. In both samples, SES identification and subjective social status were positively correlated (White: $r = 0.14$, $p = .002$; Black: $r = 0.25$, $p < .001$). SES identification and racial identification were positively correlated (White: $r = 0.59$, $p < .001$; Black: $r = 0.44$, $p < .001$). And finally, racial identification and subjective social status were positively correlated (White: $r = 0.12$, $p = .010$; Black: $r = 0.15$, $p = .002$).

The full detailed results are reported in Appendix G. Taken together, the results from the moderation analyses suggest only minor support for *H3*. As in Study 3.1, there were generally only main effects of social identification among Black participants. The more Black participants identified with their SES and race, the more positive feelings they exhibited toward diversity, but this did not differ by diversity type. There was some evidence suggesting that Black participants who weakly identified with their SES reported greater social identity threat at the SES-diversity school than at the racial-diversity school, but this effect did not seem very robust.

Results among White participants were also somewhat inconclusive. Unlike Black participants, White participants did not show a main effect of social identification on anticipated feelings. Unpacking the interactions yielded some significant results, but more research would be needed to test the robustness of these findings. Specifically, White participants who identified highly with their SES or who perceived themselves to have high social status reported greater social identity threat at the racial-diversity school than at the control school. Additionally, White participants who weakly identified with their race anticipated lower social identity threat at the SES-diversity school than the other two, while those who strongly identified with their race anticipated greater social identity threat at both the SES- and the racial-diversity school compared to the control school.

Discussion

In Study 3.2, Black Americans again showed little differentiation between a school that emphasized SES diversity, one that emphasized racial diversity, and one that did not emphasize demographic diversity at all. As such, none of the hypotheses were supported. However, the fact that Black participants did feel that the racial-diversity school and the SES-diversity school would both be more supportive of Black students than the control school suggests the null effects were not attributable to weak or unrealistic stimuli. Rather, it is possible that Black individuals do not base their perceptions of a school on its diversity statement alone.

Meanwhile, White Americans did show more movement on the outcomes. Although *H4* was also unsupported—White participants reported less colorblindness at both the SES-diversity school and the racial-diversity school relative to the control—other outcomes provided interesting conclusions. White participants felt the racial-diversity school would prioritize Black students while deprioritizing White students. And as indicated by the exploratory mediation analyses (see Appendix H), perceived levels of White-student prioritization in turn produced greater positivity and expected well-being toward the SES-diversity school, and greater social identity threat toward the racial-diversity school.

Interestingly, examining differences across the two samples indicated that White participants felt less positivity and expected less well-being toward diversity in general than Black participants, but Black participants anticipated higher social identity threat than White participants. However, the SES-diversity condition boosted White participants' level of expected well-being up to that of the Black participants, while the racial-diversity condition heightened their level of threat to that of Black participants.

Finally, there was only weak evidence of moderation by social identification. Among Black (but not White) participants, stronger identification seemed to boost positivity and expected well-being across the board. Among White participants, there was more movement with regard to social identity threat. High-SES White participants reported greater threat at the racial-diversity school (vs. the control). Additionally, low racially identified White participants reported the lowest threat at the SES-diversity school, while high racially identified White participants reported high threat in response to any kind of demographic diversity.

General Discussion

Higher education is becoming increasingly focused on low-SES students (Kurzweil et al., 2021). At the same time, the *SFFA v. Harvard* decision not only explicitly banned the use of race in admissions, but it also likely tempered broader efforts to foster racial diversity (Hill et al., 2023). As such, the focus on SES diversity will likely only get stronger. While previous research had examined how SES-based affirmative action schemes might impact URM enrollment numbers (Carnevale et al., 2023; Kidder, 2016; Reardon et al., 2018), no empirical research had yet examined how this prioritization of SES diversity would affect URM students' psychosocial well-being. In two studies examining responses to various diversity statements emphasizing different kinds of diversity, Black Americans did not seem to differentiate between the different statements. They did not, as had been expected, anticipate lower positivity and well-being or greater social identity threat at a school that prioritizes SES diversity compared to one that prioritizes racial diversity. This may have stemmed from the fact that they expected the same degree of ingroup (i.e., Black-student) support at either school, as well as the same degree of colorblindness. In contrast, White Americans anticipated greater positivity and well-being at a school that prioritizes SES (vs. racial) diversity, as well as greater social identity threat at a

school that prioritizes racial (vs. SES) diversity. These effects seem to be driven by the perception that the racial-diversity school would be less supportive of White students.

Implications

A number of conclusions can be derived from these findings. First, the lack of differentiation Black participants displayed could suggest that they react positively to all signals of an institution valuing any form of demographic diversity. According to the theory of *transference of identity safety cues*, individuals disadvantaged along one dimension reap psychological benefits from organizational cues supportive of individuals disadvantaged along a different dimension (Chaney et al., 2016). For example, the presence of gender-inclusive (vs. traditional) bathrooms can signal egalitarianism to Black and Latinx individuals and improve perceptions of an organization's racial climate (Chaney & Sanchez, 2018). Thus, Black individuals may see a school's commitment to any kind of demographic diversity (i.e., SES diversity) as a sign of the school's commitment to *all* forms of diversity, including racial. There is some preexisting evidence corroborating this idea. Russell Pascual and colleagues (2024), for example, found that people of color anticipated higher fit in a company whose diversity statement focused on notions of diversity and individual or group difference than in companies whose statement focused on notions of individualism. Similarly, Kirby et al (2023) found that even though Black Americans dislike when diversity statements define diversity broadly in terms of personality or experience, this negative reaction may be attenuated if the statement also includes mention of demographic diversity. Thus, even in the absence of explicitly race-based diversity efforts, Black Americans may assume that SES-based diversity efforts indicate an institution's broader inclusivity and commitment to inequality-reduction.

Similarly, by focusing on low-SES students, a school that emphasizes SES diversity might be seen as especially committed to supporting historically marginalized populations. According to the theory of *stigma solidarity*, marginalized groups often form coalitions with one another (Craig & Richeson, 2012), particularly when they are not competing for a scarce resource and can both attain positive outcomes (Craig & Richeson, 2016). And when members of one marginalized group (e.g., White Latinas) experience qualitatively similar forms of discrimination as members of another marginalized group (e.g., Black women), this enhances the latter group's identification with the former (Lewis et al., 2023). To the extent Black individuals feel that low-SES students of all races have faced similar forms of marginalization within higher education, this might foster a sense of solidarity and elicit a positive response toward SES diversity.

Another potential reason for the null effects among Black participants is that they feel racial-diversity efforts and SES-diversity efforts capture the same people. This is highly plausible, given that Black participants expected the SES-diversity school and the racial-diversity school to support Black students to the same degree. Since low ingroup representation can make minority-group members more attuned to cues of their devaluation (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008), the lack of anticipated differences in Black-student support may have tempered participants' consideration of possible exclusion in the SES-diversity condition. In an open-ended textbox at the end of the study, many participants stated they felt there was a high degree of overlap between URM students and low-SES students, and thus the two kinds of diversity would essentially accomplish the same thing. This speaks to the possibility that many participants may not have seen SES diversity and racial diversity as two distinct forms of diversity. Furthermore, this perception may increase in the post-affirmative action landscape, if

Black students interpret schools' race-neutral diversity efforts as an attempt to continue pursuing racial diversity indirectly.

Finally, the results could indicate that Black Americans are broadly unaffected and/or unimpressed by diversity statements. They may care more about concrete policies and actions. This possibility is hinted at in the results of Study 3.2, where Black participants reported the same sentiments toward SES and racial diversity as they did toward a "diversity" statement that did not acknowledge demographic diversity at all. While many studies do indicate that the presence of organizational diversity efforts improve minority-group members' perceptions of the organization (e.g., Chaney et al., 2016), some work does not find this (Dover et al., 2016, 2021). For example, Wilton and colleagues (2020) found that Latinx and Black participants did not indicate any more belonging in an organization that espoused pro-diversity values compared to an organization that did not. Sense of belonging was, however, tied to the actual degree of diversity (vs. homogeneity) within the organization's workforce (Wilton et al., 2020). This suggests that URM individuals might place more weight on concrete indicators of pro-diversity behavior or policies than on pro-diversity discourse.

Turning to the results from White participants, there is evidence of a high degree of ingroup bias. This is in line with past work showing that majority-group members are particularly worried about how their ingroup will fare in the face of diversity policies (N. D. Brown & Jacoby-Senghor, 2022). White Americans are more concerned with how diversity policies will impact other White individuals than with how they will impact URM individuals (Lowery et al., 2006). And although White Americans hold strong associations between multiculturalism and exclusion, this association weakens when diversity efforts are framed as including White Americans (Plaut et al., 2011). In general, having higher status generally

heightens attention to whether one's advantage is being upheld or harmed, and increases the motivation to preserve the systems of advantage (Kteily & Richeson, 2016). Thus, the present results suggest that White Americans may believe that some forms of diversity—that is, seemingly race-neutral ones like SES diversity—are more likely than others to benefit members of their ingroup and preserve their group's privileged access to resources.

Additionally, the fact that White participants felt both the SES-diversity school and the racial-diversity school would foster equally low (relative to the control condition) levels of colorblindness speaks to the notion that the presence of a diversity policy may cause White Americans to overestimate the fairness of an organization (Dover et al., 2020). That is, when a school espouses its commitment to demographic diversity, even if that form of diversity is unrelated to race, White Americans may still perceive the school as being responsive to racial injustice. An alternative interpretation of the result could be that White participants' reports of low colorblindness at the SES- and racial-diversity schools indicate fears of higher multiculturalism (i.e., the converse of colorblindness), a documented threat to White individuals (Plaut et al., 2011). However, in the exploratory mediations reported in Appendix H, higher perceived colorblindness also predicted higher social identity threat among White participants. Thus, it seems more likely that White participants were simply optimistic (perhaps naïvely so) about a race-neutral form of diversity being able to foster an awareness of racial injustices to the same extent as race-conscious diversity.

Limitations and Future Directions

A major limitation of the present work is the use of convenience samples of online respondents. Adults who are not currently enrolled or planning to enroll in higher education may find less personal relevance in the study, which could have weakened some of their responses to

the stimuli. Thus, future work should survey current or prospective college students, as they have higher personal stakes in the premise of the study. Additionally, they may have a better sense of how schools act on (or fail to act on) their professed commitments to diversity. In particular, they may have a keener understanding of how exactly schools emphasize SES diversity and the extent to which this is or is not coupled with efforts to foster racial diversity.

Additionally, there are many opportunities to build upon the measures used in the present studies. First, assessing White participants' colorblindness obliquely by asking about their *perceptions* of colorblindness likely did not provide an accurate measure of how White people actually respond to the different diversity approaches. Thus, a more direct measure of personal colorblindness endorsement should be used in future studies. Similarly, it would be fruitful to see how White people's interactions with URM individuals change as a function of the different conditions. A culture of colorblindness was theorized to be detrimental to URM students, in part, via the invalidation URM students experience while interacting with White classmates or instructors. As such, future research should use behavioral measures to capture how White students might engage with their URM classmates at a school that emphasizes SES diversity versus racial diversity.

Finally, more insight is needed into the extent to which people see SES-diversity efforts and racial-diversity efforts as distinct and mutually exclusive. Given the strong association in people's minds between "low-income individuals" and "Black individuals" (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2019), it is necessary to empirically test whether this same association exists when it comes to diversity efforts. Replicating the above studies using a within-subject design would provide a useful comparison to the current studies, as it could decouple racial-diversity efforts from SES-diversity efforts and help clarify the distinction. That said, future work should also seek to

quantify people's preexisting associations between the two forms of diversity by using more direct measures of people's perceived overlap between the two.

General Discussion

This dissertation shed light on the juxtaposition between socioeconomic-status (SES) diversity and racial diversity in higher education by identifying how perceptions of the two kinds of diversity differ and what effect this juxtaposition might have on institutions and students. Chapter 1 disentangled the diversity rationales people apply toward SES diversity and racial diversity. White (but not Black) Americans were found to apply moral rationales toward SES diversity more than toward racial diversity. This was driven by perceptions that SES diversity (vs. racial diversity) would benefit White students more, support students who had faced more hardship, support students who were more competent, and pose less realistic threat. Chapter 2 demonstrated how the differential endorsement of diversity rationales could lead to variations in policy approaches. Endorsement of moral rationales predicted support for strong diversity policies more so than endorsement of instrumental rationales, and also more so than it predicted support for weak diversity policies. Since White Americans endorsed moral rationales for SES diversity more than for racial diversity, this in turn led them to support strong SES-diversity initiatives more than strong racial-diversity initiatives. Finally, Chapter 3 examined how university approaches to diversity that emphasize SES versus racial diversity might impact the people affected by them. While Black Americans seemed to respond similarly to SES-diversity initiatives and racial-diversity initiatives, White Americans anticipated lower well-being and higher social identity threat when thinking about an environment that emphasized racial diversity compared to SES diversity.

Future Research

Given the novelty of directly examining people's juxtaposing people's perceptions (e.g., diversity rationales) of different diversity types, the current work presents numerous possibilities

for future research. In particular, delving into the mechanisms outlined in Chapter 1 would help further understand how attitudes toward different diversity types are shaped. To start, future research should more deeply examine the role of perceived benefit to White students, as this significantly drove White participants' responses in both Chapters 1 and 3. As described in Chapter 1, greater perceived benefit to White students boosts moral endorsement due to the inextricable link between ingroup biases and ideas of morality (Bocian et al., 2021; Ellemers & Van der Toorn, 2015; Leach et al., 2015). But there are other factors that could make perceived White-student benefit so critical. One likely factor that was not explored in the current work is the role of racial prejudice. Previous research has found that a person's anti-Black prejudice negatively predicts their support for race-targeted policies but not their support for income-targeted policies (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993). Similarly, *racial resentment*—the belief that underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities (URMs) do not work hard enough and receive unearned benefits—predicts more strongly preferring college scholarship programs targeting White students over those targeting Black students (Feldman & Huddy, 2005). With that in mind, future research could measure racial attitudes to examine the extent to which they predict moralizing SES diversity over racial diversity. If negative racial attitudes explain the difference in moral endorsement better than White-student prioritization, this might indicate that ingroup preferences stem not from motivations to promote group interests, per se, but rather from motivations to prevent outgroup advancement.

Another potential explanation for the importance of White-student benefit in the relative moralization of SES versus racial diversity is that it might stem from hierarchy-maintenance motives. As discussed in Chapter 1, White Americans perceive policies that potentially disadvantage White students as threatening (Lowery et al., 2006; Shteynberg et al., 2011;

Wilkins et al., 2015); this attitude is so entrenched that it persists even when the diversity efforts in question are shown to mutually benefit both ingroup and outgroup members (N. D. Brown et al., 2022; N. D. Brown & Jacoby-Senghor, 2022). Realistic threat as measured in Chapter 1 represents just one form of threat that arises in intergroup contexts (Iyer, 2022). White-student benefit could emerge from other forms of threat, given that it still mediated moral-rationale endorsement alongside the effect of realistic threat. For example, members of high-status groups are generally concerned with preserving their position in the social hierarchy (Kteily & Richeson, 2016). Increasing proportions of minority-group members can arouse status threat in White individuals due to the prospect of losing the numerical majority; this fear in turn heightens ingroup preferences and outgroup animosity (Craig & Richeson, 2014). Thus, pushing for policies that benefit White students may represent a strategy to curb this "majority-minority" trend. To test this possibility, future research could induce status threat in participants (see e.g., Craig & Richeson, 2014) and assess whether this increases the difference in endorsing moral rationales for SES diversity versus racial diversity. Additionally, future work could test the moderating role of a person's *social dominance orientation*—the belief that societies should be organized hierarchically (Ho et al., 2015). If those higher on this trait exhibit a greater moralization difference, this might indicate that minimizing the morality of racial diversity or heightening the morality of SES diversity are tactics to preserve the current social hierarchy.

Additionally, it would be informative to unpack why perceived hardship leads to greater endorsement of moral rationales, given that perceptions of hardship could themselves stem from any number of cognitive inaccuracies, intergroup biases, or self-focused motivations. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 1, White Americans vastly underestimate racial gaps in socioeconomic inequality (Kraus et al., 2019, 2022). Even when informed of the persistence of

racism in society, White Americans still cling to their belief in present-day racial equality (Onyeador et al., 2021). Moreover, White individuals have narrower definitions of discrimination than do people of color, which generally do not include subtler or more implicit forms of racism (E. R. Carter & Murphy, 2015; Greenland et al., 2022). The fact that explicit racial bias has been declining more quickly than implicit racial bias (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019) thus reinforces this misperception that racial prejudice is declining faster than it actually is. These misestimations might reduce the perceived necessity of racial-diversity efforts—and widen the gap in moralizing SES diversity and racial diversity—in that they strengthen the perception that once-oppressed groups no longer face oppression. Racial-diversity efforts would then seem superfluous. Future research could test this possibility by measuring participants' estimates of racial inequality and seeing if this moderates the effect. Likewise, researchers could experimentally manipulate the salience of racial inequities (see e.g., Onyeador et al., 2021) to assess whether this reduces the endorsement of moral reasons for racial diversity.

Finally, differences in perceived hardship between URM students and low-SES students could reflect White participants' efforts to bolster the perceived disadvantages faced by certain members of their ingroup (i.e., low-income White students). Individuals have a need to see the groups to which they belong as moral (Does et al., 2011). *Group-image threat* occurs when an ingroup's moral image is undermined because the group benefits from an unfair system or is complicit in perpetuating injustice (Does et al., 2011; Knowles et al., 2014). To minimize this threat, individuals often distance themselves from the social advantages they incur by highlighting their disadvantages. In a series of studies, Brown and Craig (2020) showed that when individuals are reminded (vs. not reminded) of their advantage due to one of their social identities (e.g., White privilege), they report greater personal and group-level disadvantage due

to one of their other social identities (e.g., SES-based discrimination). As such, the desire to distance themselves from their own privilege may increase White Americans' moral endorsement of SES diversity, as doing so implies the existence of disadvantages faced by other White Americans. Future research could test this mechanism by assessing whether reminding White participants of their racial privilege (see e.g., R. M. Brown & Craig, 2020) increases the degree to which they endorse moral rationales for SES diversity.

Practical Implications

In the wake of the Supreme Court's prohibition on using race in college admissions decisions, schools must grapple with how to pursue their diversity-related goals while a) staying within the bounds of the law, b) continuing to support URM students, and c) not alienating White students and stakeholders who (as the current research demonstrates) may feel threatened by racial-diversity efforts. Giving precedence to SES-diversity efforts may, at first glance, seem like a way to satisfy all three of these requirements. Historically, schools have often turned to indicators of SES in the face of legal restrictions against using racial identifiers in admissions (Garces & Bilyalov, 2019). Some schools now even openly acknowledge their use of SES-diversity efforts to comply with the law while still pursuing demographic diversity (Princeton University Office of Communications, 2024). In light of the current research, this approach would seem to address the concern about alienating White constituents, in that SES diversity was supported more, and evoked higher belonging and less social identity threat, than racial diversity among White participants. Moreover, such an approach would likely require less buy-in from stakeholders, given the moral benefits people see in SES diversity. As for supporting URM students, Chapter 3 provided initial evidence that Black Americans might not feel any less belonging or greater social identity threat under an SES- (vs. racial-) diversity approach, though

more research is needed to replicate these findings in more ecologically valid contexts. Although SES-diversity efforts may not produce equivalent levels of racial/ethnic diversity as race-conscious efforts (Kidder, 2016; Reardon et al., 2018), such approaches are certainly preferable to abandoning diversity efforts altogether.

But schools should not give sole precedence to SES diversity and abandon their racial-diversity efforts entirely. The capacity to enhance racial diversity in admissions has clearly been curtailed, but other ways of fostering racial equity on campus may still be possible. URM students, regardless of SES background, continue to face numerous impediments to their academic and psychosocial success in higher education (Brannon et al., 2017; Whitcomb et al., 2021). And the current sociopolitical climate that is increasingly hostile toward racial diversity likely poses an additional impediment. Thus, schools must now strengthen their efforts to foster URM students' well-being and ensure campus feels inclusive to these students. Schools must do more than celebrate URM students for their culture and heritage or the "new" perspectives they bring. This only further instrumentalizes racial diversity, lowers URM individuals' sense of inclusion, and increases their sense of being spotlighted (Chaney, 2022). Instead, schools should foster a culture that sees racial equity and inclusion as moral goods. Emphasizing how this aligns with the institution's mission should also strengthen the persuasiveness of these moral ideas (Mayer et al., 2019). Moreover, incorporating race-conscious efforts alongside race-neutral ones will hopefully address the issue of White students' sense of alienation, as including White people in definitions of diversity has been found to reduce their feelings of exclusion (Plaut et al., 2011). Thus, by preserving or strengthening their racial-equity efforts alongside the pivot to SES-diversity admissions policies, schools can safeguard URM students' well-being while ensuring that White constituents do not feel left out of diversity efforts.

A final practical implication of the current work is that URM students' psychosocial well-being must be tracked more thoroughly, with a particular eye toward how it is affected by schools' different approaches to diversity post-affirmative action ban. Though the present research found no difference in Black individuals' attitudes toward various forms of diversity, more ecologically valid settings or additional measures may uncover psychosocial disparities. For example, when schools are explicit in their use of SES as a proxy for race in their diversity efforts, it is possible this could strengthen race/class associations (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2019) and foster stereotypes about all URM students being low-income. Additionally, if schools do adopt a multi-pronged approach and blend race-neutral and race-conscious efforts, URM students could feel their school's commitment to racial equity is being diluted. With that in mind, schools must make a concerted effort to collect data on URM students' attitudes about their school, experiences of bias on campus, and overall well-being. Only by documenting changes or disparities on these indicators can institutions respond accordingly to ensure the flourishing of students who have historically been—and continue to be—marginalized in higher education.

Limitations

Given the unique context of today's higher-education landscape, the present work seems specific to SES diversity and racial diversity. Historically, efforts to expand opportunities in higher education have been concerned with racial, gender, religious, and socioeconomic discrimination (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). Given that women now make up a greater proportion of undergraduate students than men (Fry, 2023), calls for gender diversity seem confined to specific fields or levels of the status hierarchy. Increasing religious diversity similarly seems less relevant today (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). While there have been calls for more political diversity on campus (Roth, 2017), this has received relatively less attention compared to the push to increase

SES diversity. Thus, it remains to be seen how the present work extends to other forms of race-neutral diversity.

Additionally, the present work can only speak to the context of higher education. This is a singular context in which two forms of diversity are pitted against one another, a situation which may be less prevalent in other domains. Higher education is also unique in its emphasis on SES diversity, and its ability to attract individuals from various SES backgrounds. It is unclear whether such conditions exist in other contexts. For example, it seems unlikely that most workplaces would actively pursue a socioeconomically diverse workforce. And given that SES is not a legally protected status (Civil Rights Act, 1964), organizations outside of higher education are likely less focused on reducing socioeconomic discrimination than on other forms of discrimination. Addressing these limitations and understanding the generalizability of the effects documented in this dissertation offer rich opportunities for future research. It remains to be seen whether differences in moral and instrumental endorsement translate to non-academic settings and to other forms of diversity relevant in those settings.

Conclusion

In closing, this work broadly speaks to the importance of understanding how laypeople think about specific kinds of diversity, alongside how they think about diversity as a whole. Framing diversity in specific terms (i.e., not as a broad ambiguous construct) and in terms unrelated to race offers many opportunities for future research on diversity cognitions. Doing so can reveal the perceptions and attitudes held by members of high-status groups that prioritize some forms of diversity at the expense of others. This work is of particular critical importance in the present moment as some forms of diversity come under fire while others grow in popularity and prevalence. Documenting the attitudes toward SES versus racial diversity helps explain why

the former has not been met with the same resistance as the latter. It also uncovers cognitions that can potentially detrimentally impact minoritized students via the stereotypes, biases, and misperceptions they foster. Finally, this work can suggest practical avenues for shifting negative attitudes toward certain diversity types, in the hopes of advancing racial equity in education and society more broadly.

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Appendix A

Alternative Post-hoc Pairwise Comparisons of Rationale Endorsement in Chapter 1

As supplementary analysis in each study from Chapter 1, the diversity type X rationale interaction was decomposed to compare the endorsement of moral versus instrumental endorsement within each condition. This indicates which rationale is more strongly endorsed for each diversity type. White Americans seem to primarily apply the moral rationale to SES diversity, but the results are more inconsistent regarding whether White Americans primarily apply the instrumental rationale to racial diversity.

Studies 1.1a-c

Means and comparisons are presented in Table 2 of the main text. Results revealed that, across all four samples, participants consistently endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity more than they endorsed instrumental reasons, all ts > 2.624, ps < .009. In contrast, there was never a difference between moral and instrumental endorsement for either racial diversity, all ts < 1.479, ps > .140, or gender diversity, all ts < 1.451, ps > .148. In short, all participants—both White and Black participants—endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity more than instrumental reasons, but neither rationale was more strongly applied to racial diversity or gender diversity.

Study 1.2

In Study 1.2, participants also endorsed moral reasons (M = 5.42, SD = 1.55) significantly more than instrumental ones (M = 5.30, SD = 1.57) for SES diversity, $t(2366) = 3.556$, $p < .001$. Additionally, in contrast to Studies 1.1a-c, participants endorsed instrumental reasons (M = 5.34, SD = 1.68) significantly more than moral reasons (M = 5.10, SD = 1.83) for racial diversity, $t(2358) = -7.005$, $p < .001$. They also endorsed instrumental reasons (M = 4.23, SD = 1.62)

marginally more than moral ones (M = 4.16, SD = 1.67) for the total-enrollment condition, $t(2327) = -1.933$, $p = .053$.

Appendix B

Study 1.2 Analyses Disaggregated by Study

Study 1.2a

Rationale Endorsement

To test the endorsement of moral versus instrumental rationales for each policy, a 3 (policy type: SES diversity, racial diversity, total enrollment) X 2 (rationale: moral, instrumental) mixed-effects ANOVA was run, with all the same specifications described in the main text.

There was a significant main effect of policy type, $F(2, 2580) = 433.326$, $p < .001$, and a significant main effect of rationale, $F(1, 2580) = 6.190$, $p = .013$. Importantly, these effects were qualified by a significant policy type X rationale interaction, $F(2, 2580) = 4.436$, $p = .012$.

Unpacking the interaction revealed the predicted difference between SES diversity ($M = 5.38$, $SD = 1.58$) and racial diversity ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.77$) with regard to moral endorsement, $t(2580) = 2.699$, $p = .019$. While not of primary theoretical interest, results also revealed no difference in the endorsement of instrumental rationales between SES diversity ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.61$) and racial diversity ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.63$), $p = .287$. Finally, participants endorsed both moral and instrumental rationales for both diversity conditions more than for the total-enrollment condition, all ts > 16.758, ps < .001.

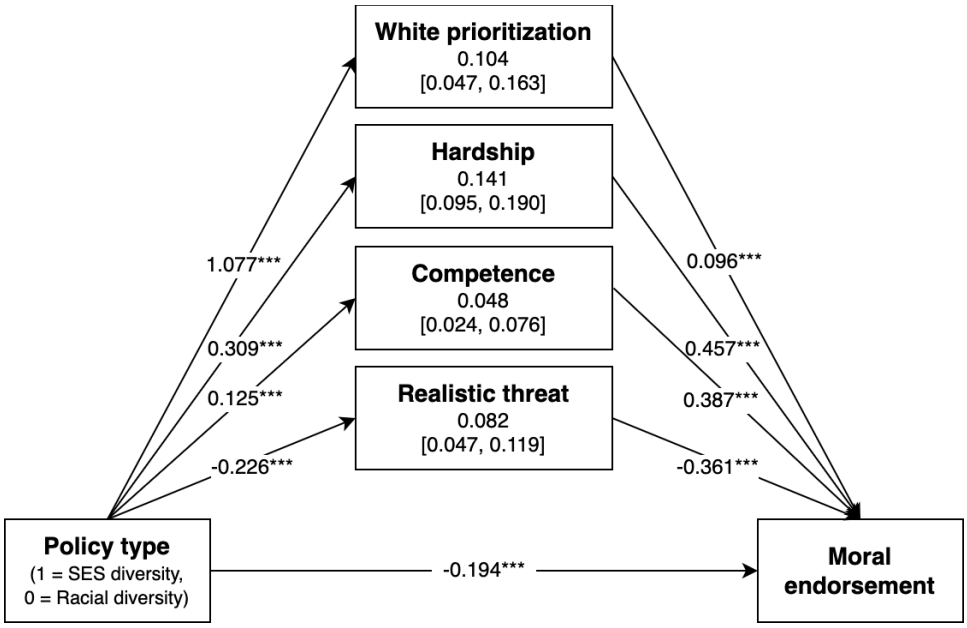
Mechanisms of Moralization

To test the mechanisms potentially underlying the moralization of SES diversity relative to racial diversity, the same mediation model as detailed in the main text was run. Results are shown in Figure B1. SES diversity was associated with greater perceived White-student prioritization, hardship, and competence, and with lower perceived realistic threat, compared to racial diversity, all ps < .001. In turn, White-student prioritization, hardship, and competence

were all associated with greater endorsement of the moral rationale, while realistic threat was associated with weaker moral endorsement, all *p*s < .001. As such, the indirect effects of all four variables were significant, as indicated by the confidence intervals not including zero.

Figure B1

Study 1.2a Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Moral Endorsement



Note. Models show the unstandardized coefficients. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. *n* = 517. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$

Study 1.2b

Rationale Endorsement

To test the endorsement of moral versus instrumental rationales for each policy, a 3 (policy type: SES diversity, racial diversity, total enrollment) X 2 (rationale: moral, instrumental) mixed-effects ANOVA was run, with all the same specifications described in the main text.

There was a significant main effect of policy type, $F(2, 2283.45) = 244.703$, $p < .001$, but no main effect of rationale, $p = .631$. Importantly, there was a significant policy type X rationale interaction, $F(2, 2245.21) = 9.356$, $p < .001$.

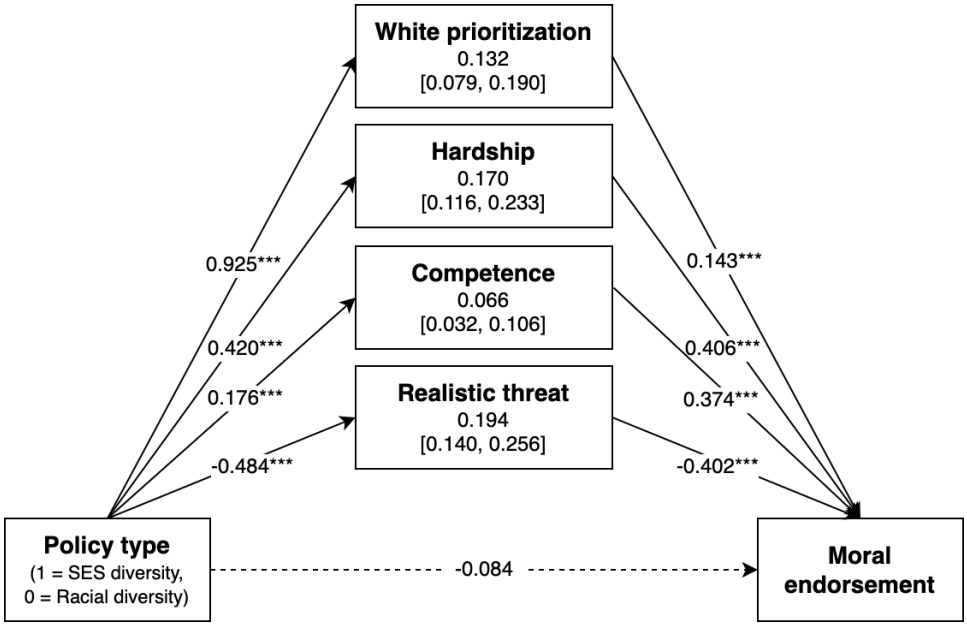
Unpacking the interaction revealed the predicted difference between SES diversity (M = 5.47, SD = 1.53) and racial diversity (M = 4.99, SD = 1.89) with regard to moral endorsement, $t(2262) = 6.415$, $p < .001$. While not of primary theoretical interest, results also revealed no difference in the endorsement of instrumental rationales between SES diversity (M = 5.26, SD = 1.53) and racial diversity (M = 5.24, SD = 1.73), $p = .937$. Finally, participants endorsed both moral and instrumental rationales for both diversity conditions more than for the total-enrollment condition, all ts > 10.083, ps < .001.

Mechanisms of Moralization

To test the mechanisms potentially underlying the moralization of SES diversity relative to racial diversity, the same mediation model as detailed in the main text was run. Results are shown in Figure B2. SES diversity was associated with greater perceived White-student prioritization, hardship, and competence, and with lower perceived realistic threat, compared to racial diversity, all ps < .001. In turn, White-student prioritization, hardship, and competence were all associated with greater endorsement of the moral rationale, while realistic threat was associated with weaker moral endorsement, all ps < .001. As such, the indirect effects of all four variables were significant, as indicated by the confidence intervals not including zero.

Figure B2

Study 1.2b Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Moral Endorsement



Note. Models show the unstandardized coefficients. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. Dashed lines indicate a non-significant path. $n = 477$. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$

Appendix C

Exploratory Study Analyzing Rationale Endorsement Absent Policy Support

To address the concern of whether participants were purely anchoring on their level of support for each diversity type when indicating their endorsement of moral rationales, a non-preregistered exploratory study was run wherein participants were never asked to indicate their support for the diversity type in question.

Method

Participants

A total of 300 White Americans were recruited via the online survey platform Prolific using the same eligibility criteria as reported in the studies from Chapter 1 of the main text. A total of 20 participants were removed based on the following exclusion criteria: identifying as a race other than monoracially White, indicating answering randomly, spending more than 3 *SD* greater than the mean completion time on the study, or failing more than one attention check. The final sample consisted of 280 participants (M_{age} = 38.50, SD_{age} = 12.80; cisgender men = 49.30%, cisgender women = 48.20%, non-binary/other = 2.50%).

Procedure

After consenting, participants were asked to read different statements from university presidents about a school diversity policy and then provide their opinions regarding each policy. Specifically, participants were presented with three statements, in counterbalanced order, which described either SES diversity, racial/ethnic diversity, or ambiguously defined diversity. The stimuli for the two explicit diversity types read as follows:

> "Many colleges and universities across the country are committed to diversifying their student bodies. While our peer institutions may focus on other groups, our school has decided to prioritize [**socioeconomic** / **racial/ethnic**] **diversity**. We will be implementing

> strategic initiatives aiming to include and support [**first-generation and/or low-income students / racial/ethnic minorities**] on our campus." – University President

The stimuli for the ambiguously defined diversity read as follows:

> "Many colleges and universities across the country are committed to diversifying their student bodies. While our peer institutions may go about this a different way, our school has decided to prioritize **diversity** by implementing strategic initiatives aimed at including and supporting **students with diverse backgrounds and identities** on our campus." – University President

Note, the bolded font was present in the original stimuli shown to participants. Moreover, the phrase "first-generation student" was defined for participants.

After reading each statement, participants answered a recall item meant to strengthen the salience of the diversity type in question. Participants were then presented with a list of ten reasons—five of which were moral and five of which were instrumental—in randomized order and indicated their agreement with each reason. Finally, participants answered a set of demographic questions.

Two different versions of the recall item were used, which constituted a between-subjects factor. In one version, participants were asked "Which specific group is the school planning to prioritize?" and then shown seven options that included "first-generation and low-income students", "racial and ethnic minority students", and "the school does not specify a particular group", as well as four additional filler categories (e.g., "LGBTQ+ students"). In the other version, participants were only shown two options. For the explicit diversity statements, participants were asked "What kind of diversity will the school focus on?" and the options were the correct answer (e.g., "only socioeconomic diversity") and "the school does not specify a particular group." For the ambiguous diversity statement, participants were asked "Did the school focus on a specific type of diversity?" and the options were "No, the school does not specify a particular group" and "Yes, the school specified a particular group." In both versions,

participants could not move on until they answered the item correctly. The type of recall item was included in the analysis as a between-subjects factor. However, neither the main effect nor any of the interaction terms that included recall-item type were significant. Thus, this variable was dropped from the analysis.

Measures

Moral Endorsement. Endorsement of moral rationales was measured using participants' average agreement to the following five reasons: "It is a moral obligation", "It is the fair and equitable thing to do", "It would help redress both past and present inequities in society", "It would ensure that no group is excluded or disadvantaged", and "It would help ensure that the benefits of education are more evenly distributed throughout society" ($\alpha_{avg} = .93$). Participants indicated their responses on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Instrumental Endorsement. Endorsement of instrumental rationales was measured using participants' average agreement to the following five reasons: "Their presence on campus will enrich all students' educational experience", "Their presence on campus will prepare other students for the 'real' world", "The perspectives they would bring will fuel innovation and creativity", "Other students could learn from their perspectives and experiences", and "Society is becoming more diverse and globalized, and students need to learn to interact with different kinds of people" ($\alpha_{avg} = .96$). Participants indicated their responses on a 7-point scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Results

To test the endorsement of moral versus instrumental rationales for each policy, a 3 (diversity type: SES, racial, ambiguous) X 2 (rationale: moral, instrumental) mixed-effects

ANOVA was run, with all the same specifications described in the studies from Chapter 1 in the main text.

Results mirrored those from the main text, confirming the primary effect of interest. There were significant main effects of diversity type, $F(2, 278) = 8.820$, $p < .001$, and of rationale, $F(1, 279) = 40.105$, $p < .001$, which were qualified by the expected diversity type X rationale interaction, $F(2, 558) = 33.906$, $p < .001$.

Unpacking the interaction revealed the predicted difference between SES diversity ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.41$) and racial diversity ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 1.71$) with regard to moral endorsement, $t(451) = 6.485$, $p < .001$. While not of primary theoretical interest, results indicated that participants also endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity more than for the ambiguous diversity ($M = 4.89$, $SD = 1.62$), $t(447) = 6.611$, $p < .001$. There was no difference in the endorsement of instrumental rationales between SES diversity ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.27$) and racial diversity ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.48$), $p = .847$. None of the other comparisons were significant either, all ps $> .328$.

In sum, even without first being prompted about their support for each diversity type, participants still moralized SES diversity more than racial diversity. Thus, it seems that White participants' greater endorsement of moral rationales for SES diversity versus racial diversity is more than just a post-hoc justification for their greater support of SES (vs. racial) diversity.

Appendix D

Study 2.1 Analyses Disaggregated by Study

For each of the studies from Chapter 1 (minus the Black sample from Study 1.1c), a mixed-effects ANOVA was run where diversity type predicted diversity support to examine how support for diversity varies as a function of diversity type. The model included a random intercept for participant, and the presentation order of SES versus race was added as a covariate (which is not of theoretical interest and not discussed in the results below).

Mediation analyses were then conducted to examine whether the moral endorsement of either policy underlies support for SES diversity versus racial diversity to a greater extent than the instrumental endorsement of either policy. The models followed the same specifications as detailed in the main text.

To allow for comparison across studies, standardized scores of all variables were still used. However, when reporting *M*s and *SD*s, the unstandardized value is included in brackets alongside the standardized value. As a reminder, in Studies 1.1a-c, participants indicated their support on a 6-point scale, and in Studies 1.2 and 1.3, participants indicated their support on a 7-point scale.

Study 1.1a

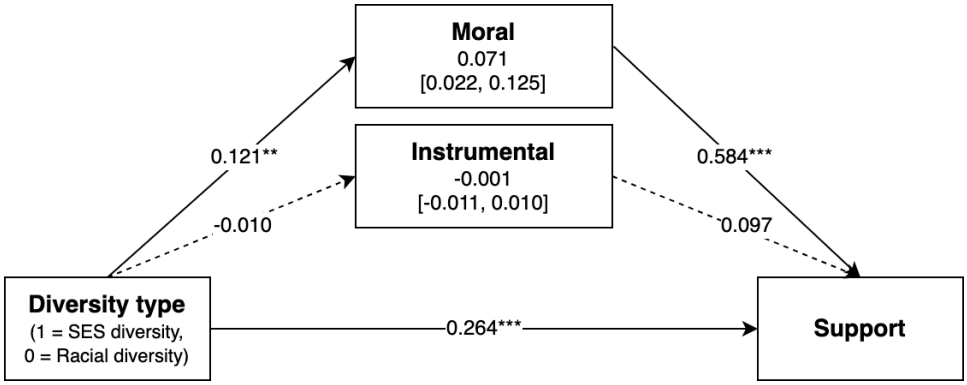
Results from the ANOVA revealed a significant effect of diversity type, $F(2, 348) = 18.747$, $p < .001$. Examining the differences further revealed that participants supported SES diversity ($M = 0.24$ [4.95], $SD = 0.81$ [1.13]) more than racial diversity ($M = -0.09$ [4.49], $SD = 1.06$ [1.49]), $t(348) = 4.841$, $p < .001$. Examining the non-critical comparisons indicated participants also supported SES diversity more than the control condition ($M = -0.15$ [4.41], *SD*

= 1.07 [1.49]), $t(348) = 5.668$, $p < .001$, but there was no statistically significant difference between racial diversity and the control condition, $p = .687$.

Results from the mediation are presented in Figure D1. Only moral endorsement significantly predicted diversity support.

Figure D1

Study 1.1a Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Diversity Support



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. Dashed lines indicate a non-significant path. $n = 175$. SES = socioeconomic status. ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$.

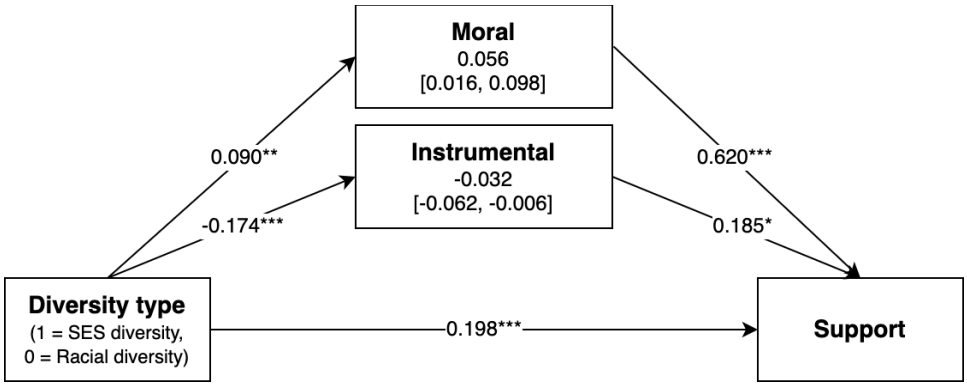
Study 1.1b

Results from the ANOVA revealed a significant effect of diversity type, $F(2, 360) = 27.084$, $p < .001$. Examining the differences further revealed that participants supported SES diversity ($M = 0.21$ [4.91], $SD = 0.88$ [1.15]) more than racial diversity ($M = -0.01$ [4.62], $SD = 1.06$ [1.38]), $t(360) = 4.064$, $p < .001$. Examining the non-critical comparisons indicated participants also supported both SES diversity more than the control condition ($M = -0.19$ [4.39], $SD = 1.01$ [1.31]), $t(360) = 7.346$, $p < .001$, and racial diversity and more than control condition, $t(360) = 3.282$, $p = .003$.

Results from the mediation are presented in Figure D2. Both moral and instrumental endorsement significantly predicted diversity support, though the magnitude of the indirect effect of moral endorsement was larger than that for instrumental endorsement, in absolute terms.

Figure D2

Study 1.1b Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Diversity Support



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. n = 181. SES = socioeconomic status.
***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

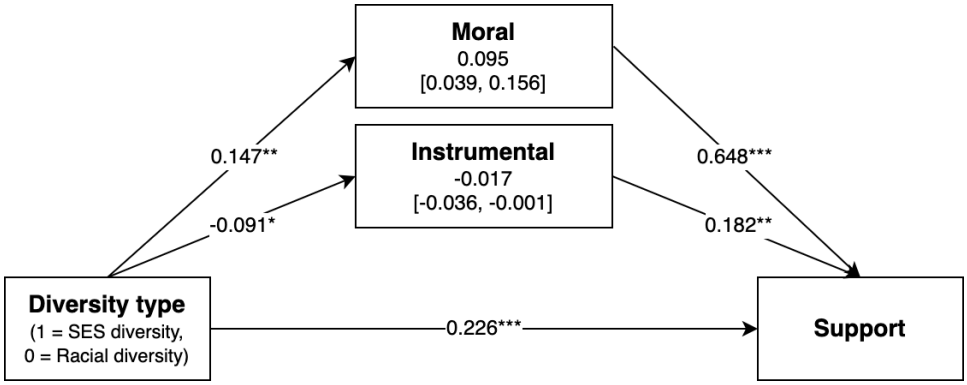
Study 1.1c

Results from the ANOVA revealed a significant effect of diversity type, $F(2, 360)$ = 23.905, p < .001. Examining the differences further revealed that participants supported SES diversity (M = 0.24 [5.02], SD = 0.82 [1.11]) more than racial diversity (M = -0.06 [4.60], SD = 1.08 [1.47]), $t(360)$ = 4.869, p < .001. Examining the non-critical comparisons indicated participants also supported SES diversity more than the control condition (M = -0.18 [4.45], SD = 1.04 [1.42]), $t(360)$ = 6.686, p < .001, but there was no statistically significant difference between racial diversity and the control condition, p = .165.

Results from the mediation are presented in Figure D3. Both moral and instrumental endorsement significantly predicted diversity support, though the magnitude of the indirect effect of moral endorsement was larger than that for instrumental endorsement, in absolute terms.

Figure D3

Study 1.1c Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Diversity Support



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. n = 181. SES = socioeconomic status.
***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05.

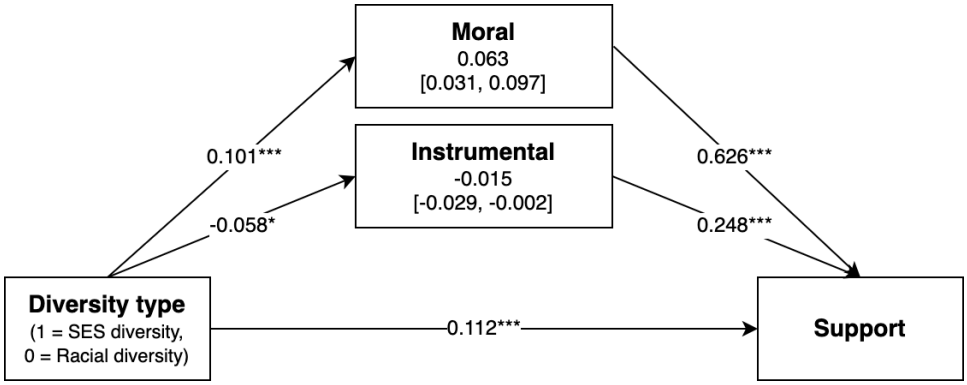
Study 1.2a

Results revealed a significant effect of diversity type, $F(2, 1032) = 119.853$, $p < .001$. Examining the differences further revealed that participants supported SES diversity (M = 0.28 [5.98], SD = 0.88 [1.43]) more than racial diversity (M = 0.12 [5.72], SD = 1.03 [1.69]), $t(1032) = 3.452$, $p = .002$. Examining the non-critical comparisons indicated participants also supported both SES diversity more than the control condition (M = -0.41 [4.85], SD = 0.95 [1.55]), $t(1032) = 14.797$, $p < .001$, and racial diversity and more than control condition, $t(1032) = 11.345$, $p < .001$.

Results from the mediation are presented in Figure D4. Both moral endorsement and instrumental endorsement significantly predicted diversity support, though the magnitude of the indirect effect of moral endorsement was larger than that for instrumental endorsement, in absolute terms.

Figure D4

Study 1.2a Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Diversity Support



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. n = 517. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$; *$p < .05$.

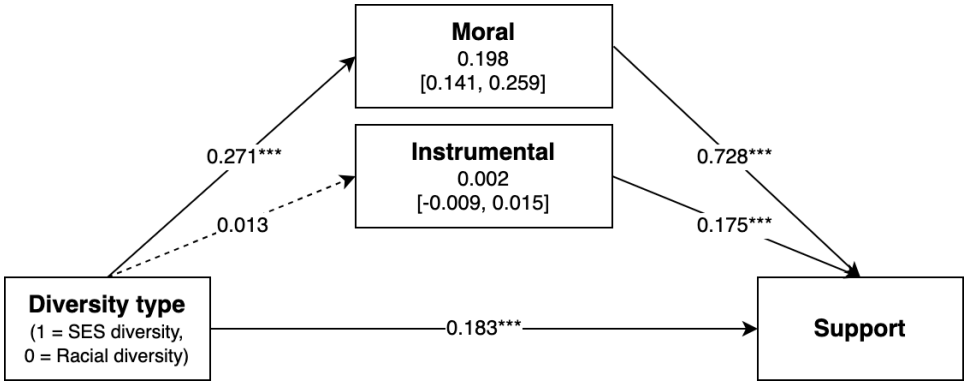
Study 1.2b

Results from the ANOVA revealed a significant effect of diversity type, $F(2, 911.06) = 58.347$, $p < .001$. Examining the differences further revealed that participants supported SES diversity ($M = 0.32$ [5.72], $SD = 0.89$ [1.60]) more than racial diversity ($M = -0.06$ [5.03], $SD = 1.12$ [2.02]), $t(909) = 7.235$, $p < .001$. Examining the non-critical comparisons indicated participants also supported both SES diversity more than the control condition ($M = -0.24$ [4.72], $SD = 0.89$ [1.60]), $t(912) = 10.589$, $p < .001$, and racial diversity and more than control condition, $t(913) = 3.268$, $p = .003$.

Results from the mediation are presented in Figure D5. Both moral and instrumental endorsement significantly predicted diversity support, though the magnitude of the effect was larger for moral endorsement than for instrumental endorsement. However, only the indirect effect of moral endorsement was significant, likely due to the non-significant difference between SES-diversity and racial-diversity in terms of instrumental endorsement.

Figure D5

Study 1.2b Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Diversity Support



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. Dashed lines indicate a non-significant path. $n = 477$. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$.

Appendix E

Study 2.2 Analyses Disaggregated by Study

Study 2.2a

Rationale Endorsement

To test the endorsement of moral versus instrumental rationales for each diversity type, the same 2 (diversity type: SES, race) X 2 (rationale: moral, instrumental) mixed-effects ANOVA as in the main text was run. Results revealed no main effect of diversity type, $p = .488$, but a significant main effect for rationale, $F(1, 186) = 4.258$, $p = .041$.

This main effect was qualified by the expected interaction between diversity type and rationale, $F(1, 186) = 21.067$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons indicated that participants endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity ($M = 5.80$, $SD = 1.19$) marginally more than for racial diversity ($M = 5.68$, $SD = 1.40$), $t(318) = 1.900$, $p = .058$. Additionally, participants endorsed instrumental reasons for racial diversity ($M = 5.95$, $SD = 1.10$) more than for SES diversity ($M = 5.76$, $SD = 1.14$), $t(318) = -3.068$, $p = .002$.

Policy Support

To test whether participants' support for SES versus racial diversity differed as a function of policy strength, the same 2 (diversity type: SES, race) X 2 (policy strength: strong, weak) mixed-effects ANOVA was run as detailed in the main text.

Results revealed no main effect of diversity type, $F(1, 186) = 0.733$, $p = .393$, but a significant main effect of policy strength, $F(1, 186) = 64.662$, $p < .001$, such that, in general, participants supported weak diversity policies more than strong diversity policies, $t(186) = -8.041$, $p < .001$. More importantly, these main effects were qualified by the expected interaction between diversity type and policy-strength, $F(1, 186) = 5.990$, $p = .015$.

Unpacking the interaction revealed that, as hypothesized, participants supported strong SES-diversity policies (M = 4.22, SD = 1.60) more than strong racial-diversity policies (M = 4.06, SD = 1.66), $t(372) = 2.322$, $p = .021$. Moreover, there was no difference in participants' support for weak racial-diversity policies (M = 5.34, SD = 1.34) versus weak SES-diversity policies (M = 5.25, SD = 1.43), $p = .274$.

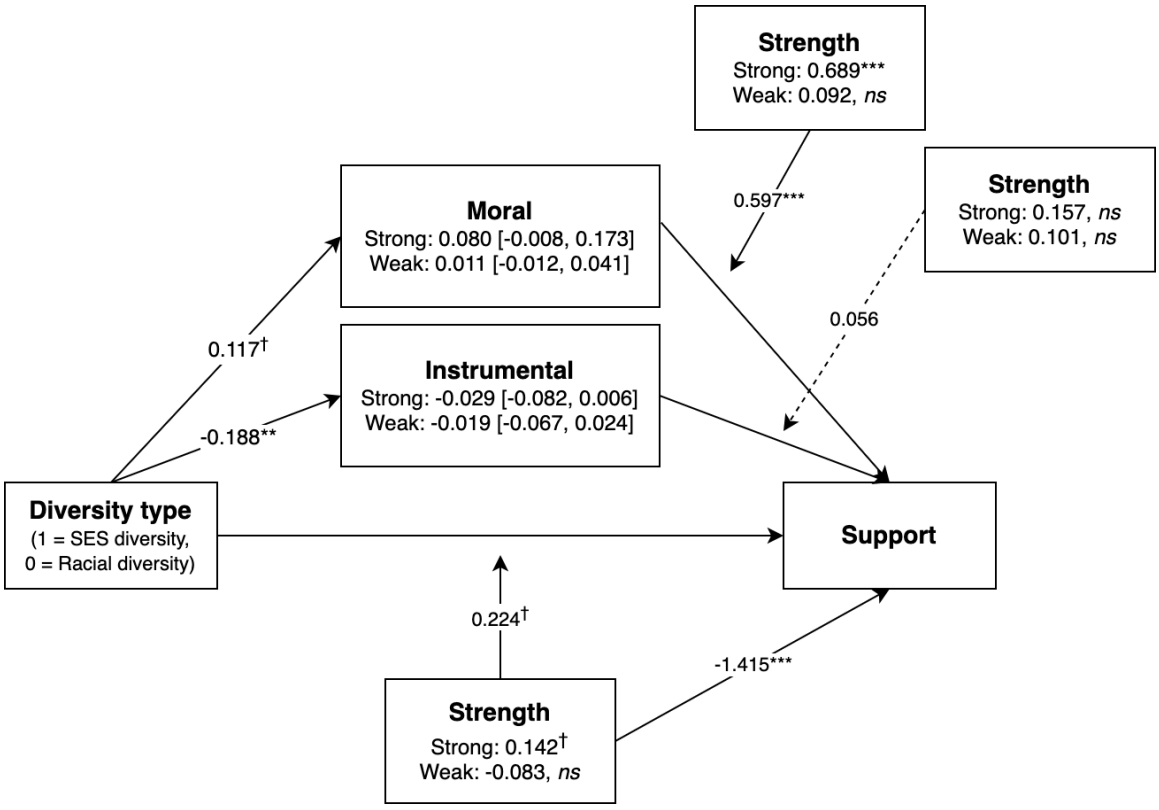
Moderated Mediation

To examine the degree to which moral and instrumental endorsement drive the differences between SES- and racial-diversity policy support as a function of policy strength, the same moderated mediation as detailed in the main text was run. Results are depicted in Figure E1.

The pattern of results slightly mirrored those from the main text. Policy strength significantly moderated the effect of moral endorsement on policy support such that moral endorsement only predicted support for strong—but not weak—policies. The effect of instrumental endorsement on policy support was not moderated by policy strength in that both for strong and weak policies, instrumental endorsement did not predict support. Although none of the indirect effects reached significance, the absence of a significant indirect effect for moral endorsement on strong policy support is likely due to the fact that, in this sample, there was only a marginal difference in terms of moral endorsement for SES diversity versus racial diversity.

Figure E1

Study 2.2a Moderated Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Policy Support Moderated by Policy Strength



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. Dashed lines indicate a non-significant path. n = 187. SES = socioeconomic status. ***p < .001; **p < .01; † < .10; *ns* = not significant.

Study 2.2b

Rationale Endorsement

To test the endorsement of moral versus instrumental rationales for each diversity type, the same 2 (diversity type: SES, race) X 2 (rationale: moral, instrumental) mixed-effects ANOVA was run as in the main text. Results revealed no main effect of diversity type, p = .128, but a significant main effect for rationale, $F(1, 372) = 27.490$, p < .001.

This main effect was qualified by the expected interaction between diversity type and rationale, $F(1, 372) = 18.156$, $p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons indicated that participants endorsed moral reasons for SES diversity ($M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.49$) significantly more than for racial diversity ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.69$), $t(609) = 3{,}501$, $p = .001$. There was no significant difference in the endorsement of instrumental reasons between racial diversity ($M = 5.61$, $SD = 1.42$) and SES diversity ($M = 5.56$, $SD = 1.31$), $p = .379$.

Policy Support

To test whether participants' support for SES versus racial diversity differed as a function of policy strength, the same 2 (diversity type: SES, race) X 2 (policy strength: strong, weak) mixed-effects ANOVA was run as detailed in the main text.

Results revealed a main effect of diversity type, $F(1, 372) = 7.984$, $p = .005$, such that, in general, participants supported SES-diversity policies more than racial-diversity policies, $t(372) = 2.826$, $p = .005$. There was also a main effect of policy strength, $F(1, 372) = 163.774$, $p < .001$, such that, in general, participants supported weak diversity policies more than strong diversity policies, $t(372) = -12.797$, $p < .001$. More importantly, these main effects were qualified by the expected interaction between diversity type and policy-strength, $F(1, 372) = 18.168$, $p < .001$.

Unpacking the interaction revealed that, as hypothesized, participants supported strong SES-diversity policies ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.69$) more than strong racial-diversity policies ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.79$), $t(741) = 4.979$, $p < .001$. Moreover, there was no difference in participants' support for weak racial-diversity policies ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.40$) versus weak SES-diversity policies ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.47$), $p = .389$.

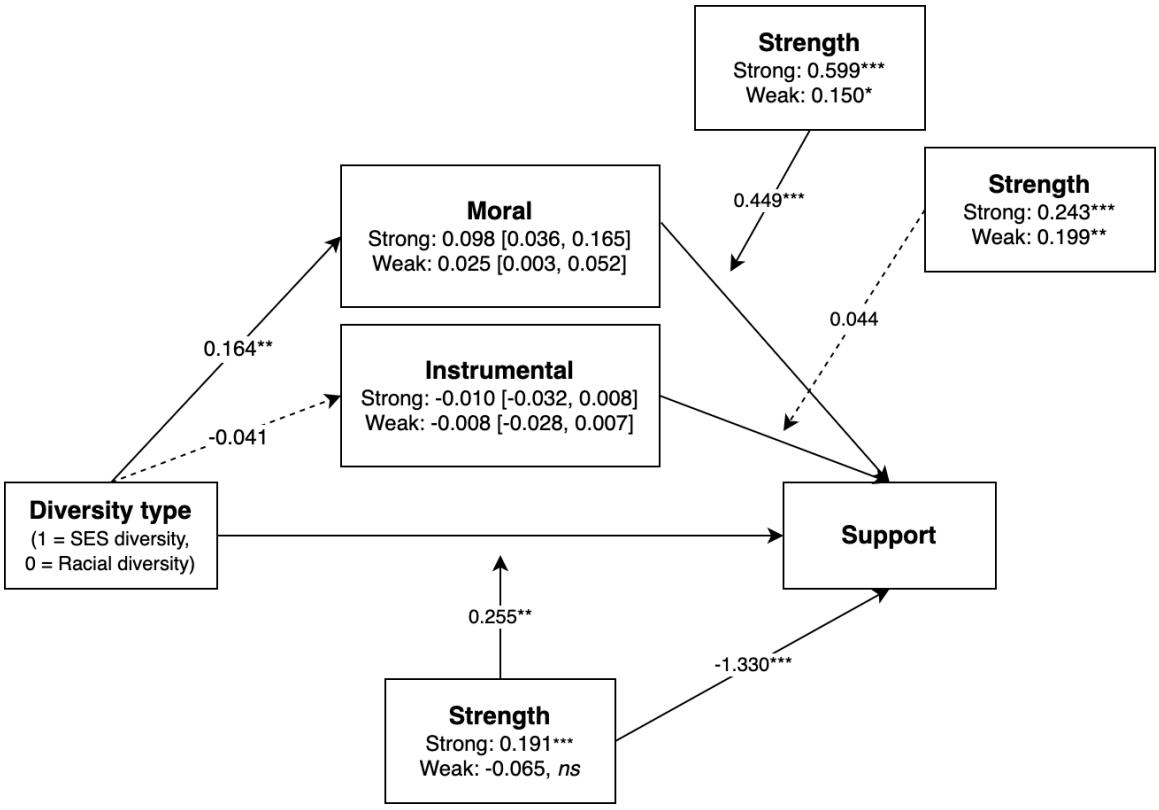
Moderated Mediation

To examine the degree to which moral and instrumental endorsement drive the differences between SES- and racial-diversity policy support as a function of policy strength, the same moderated mediation was run as detailed in the main text. Results are depicted in Figure E2.

The pattern of results generally mirrored those from the main text. Policy strength significantly moderated the effect of moral endorsement on policy support such that moral endorsement predicted support for strong policies at a stronger magnitude than support for weak policies. The effect of instrumental endorsement on policy support was not moderated by policy strength in that both for strong and weak policies, instrumental endorsement predicted support to a roughly equivalent degree. Finally, both the indirect effects of moral endorsement on strong-policy support and on weak-policy support were significant, with a contrast between the two effects showing that the indirect effect for strong-policy support was significantly larger than that for weak-policy support, $b = 0.074$, $SE = 0.30$, $p = .014$. Meanwhile the indirect effects of instrumental endorsement were not significant.

Figure E2

Study 2.2b Moderated Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Policy Support Moderated by Policy Strength



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. Dashed lines indicate a non-significant path. n = 373. SES = socioeconomic status. ***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05; *ns* = not significant.

Appendix F

Study 2.2 Analyses with Identity-Blind Item

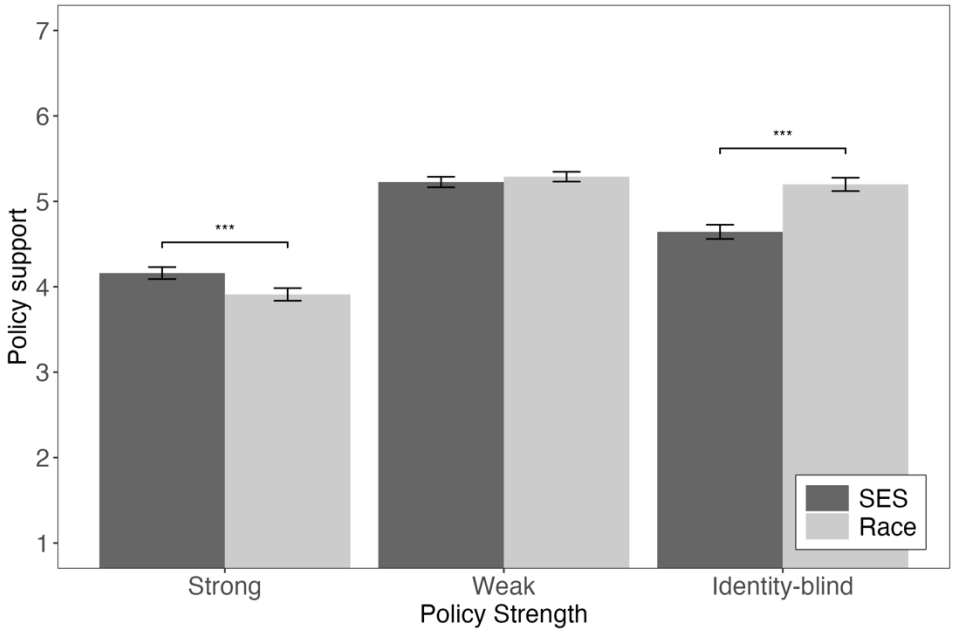
Policy Support

The same mixed-effects ANOVA as described in Study 2.2 of the main text was run, this time with the identity-blind condition included in the policy-strength factor. Results revealed a significant main effect of diversity type, $F(1, 559) = 14.037$, $p < .001$, and a significant main effect of policy strength, $F(2, 558) = 141.728$, $p < .001$. More importantly, these main effects were qualified by the expected interaction between diversity type and policy strength, $F(2, 1118) = 56.586$, $p < .001$.

In addition to the results reported in the main text, unpacking the interaction also revealed participants supported the race-blind policy ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.86$) more than they supported the SES-blind policy ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.97$), $t(1673) = -10.117$, $p < .001$, see Figure F1.

Figure F1

Mean Levels of Support for Strong and Weak Diversity Policies in Study 2.2 With Identity-Blind Policy Included



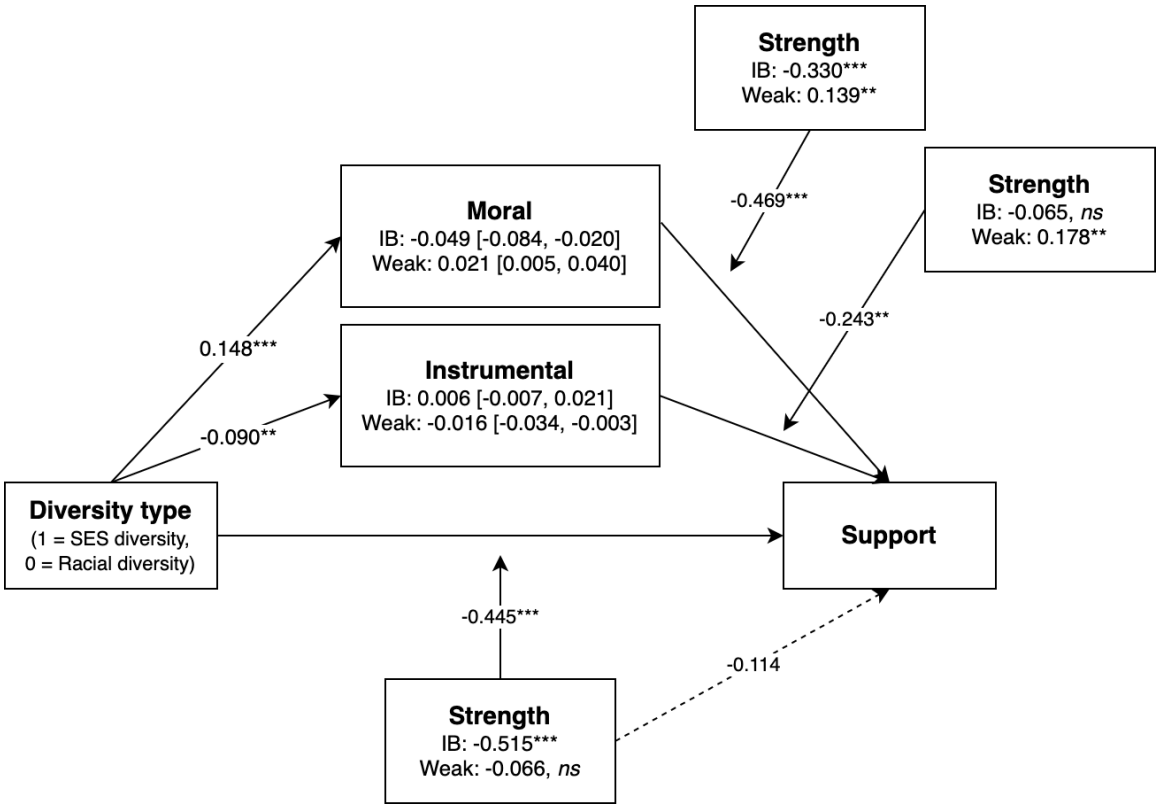
Note. Error bars represent ± 1 *SE*. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$.

Mediation

To examine the degree to which moral and instrumental endorsement drive the differences between SES- and racial-diversity policy support as a function of policy strength, a series of moderated mediations were run with the same specifications as those described in the main text. The first model compared strong policies to weak policies, and can be found in the main text. Results from the second model comparing identity-blind policies (coded as 1) to weak policies (coded as 0) are depicted in Figure F2.

Figure F2

Study 2.2 Moderated Mediation Testing Indirect Effects of Rationale Endorsement on Policy Support Moderated by Identity-Blind Versus Weak Policies



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. Dashed lines indicate a non-significant path. IB = identity-blind.
***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *ns* = not significant.

Appendix G

Full Results from Analyses Testing Moderation by Social Identification in Chapter 3

Study 3.1

SES Identification

Positivity. For positivity, results revealed no significant interaction between diversity type, SCOTUS, and SES identification on positivity, $F(2, 432) = 0.072$, $p = .931$. There was only a significant main effect of SES identification such that a stronger identification with one's SES was associated with more positivity toward the school in question, $b = 0.150$, $SE = 0.032$, $p < .001$. The diversity type X SES identification interaction was not significant in either SCOTUS condition, both ps > .654.

Well-being. For expected well-being, results revealed no significant interaction between diversity type, SCOTUS, and SES identification, $F(2, 432) = 1.658$, $p = .192$. There was only a significant main effect of SES identification such that a stronger identification with one's SES was associated with greater expected well-being toward the school in question, $b = 0.205$, $SE = 0.033$, $p < .001$. The diversity type X SES identification interaction was not significant in either SCOTUS condition, both ps > .428.

Social Identity Threat. For social identity threat, results revealed no significant interaction between diversity type, SCOTUS, and SES identification, $F(2, 432) = 0.067$, $p = .935$. None of the lower-order effects were significant either, all ps > .467. The diversity type X SES identification interaction was not significant in either SCOTUS condition, both ps > .882.

Subjective Social Status

Positivity. For positivity, results revealed no significant interaction between diversity type, SCOTUS, and subjective social status, $F(2, 432) = 1.186$, $p = .307$. None of the lower-

order effects were significant either, all *p*s > .215. The diversity type X subjective social status interaction was not significant in either SCOTUS condition, both *p*s > .142.

Well-being. For expected well-being, results revealed no significant interaction between diversity type, SCOTUS, and subjective social status, $F(2, 432) = 1.944$, $p = .144$. There was only a significant main effect of subjective social status such that higher subjective status was associated with greater expected well-being at the school in question, $b = 0.113$, $SE = 0.039$, $p = .004$. The diversity type X subjective social status interaction was not significant in either SCOTUS condition, both *p*s > .183.

Social Identity Threat. For social identity threat, results revealed no significant interaction between diversity type, SCOTUS, and subjective social status, $F(2, 432) = 0.183$, $p = .833$. None of the lower-order effects were significant either, all *p*s > .451. The diversity type X subjective social status interaction was not significant in either SCOTUS condition, both *p*s > .760.

Racial Identification

Positivity. For positivity, results revealed no significant interaction between diversity type, SCOTUS, and racial identification, $F(2, 432) = 0.200$, $p = .819$. There was only a significant main effect of racial identification such that stronger identification with one's race (i.e., stronger identification with being Black) was associated with more positivity toward the school in question, $b = 0.273$, $SE = 0.043$, $p < .001$. The diversity type X racial identification interaction was not significant in either SCOTUS condition, both *p*s > .508.

Well-being. For expected well-being, results revealed a positive main effect of racial identification, $b = 0.270$, $SE = 0.045$, $p < .001$, and a marginally significant interaction between diversity type, SCOTUS, and racial identification, $F(2, 432) = 2.587$, $p = .076$. Unpacking the

interaction revealed that none of the comparisons in the SCOTUS-present condition were significant, all *p*s > .217. Meanwhile, in the SCOTUS-absent condition, among participants with high racial identification, more well-being was expected at the ambiguous-diversity school than at both the SES-diversity school, $t(432) = 2.181$, $p = .030$, and the racial-diversity school, $t(432) = 2.206$, $p = .028$. No other comparison reached significance, all *p*s > .261.

Social Identity Threat. For social identity threat, results revealed no significant interaction between diversity type, SCOTUS, and racial identification, $F(2, 432) = 1.665$, $p = .190$. None of the lower-order effects were significant either, all *p*s > .265. The diversity type X racial identification interaction was not significant in the SCOTUS-mentioned condition, $p = .936$, but it was in the SCOTUS-absent condition, $F(2, 215) = 3.842$, $p = .023$. Specifically, among participants with low racial identification, the SES-diversity condition produced less social identity threat than the ambiguous-diversity condition, $t(215) = -2.428$, $p = .042$. No other comparison reached significance, all *p*s > .305.

Study 3.2

SES Identification

Positivity. For positivity, results revealed no significant three-way interaction between diversity type, sample, and SES identification, $F(2, 884) = 0.664$, $p = .515$. There were only significant main effects of diversity type, $F(2, 884) = 3.714$, $p = .025$, sample, $F(1, 884) = 45.542$, $p < .001$, and SES identification such that a stronger SES identity was associated with more positivity toward the school in question, $b = 0.220$, $SE = 0.048$, $p < .001$. The diversity type X SES identification interaction was not significant in either sample, both *p*s > .205.

Well-being. For expected well-being, results revealed no significant three-way interaction between diversity type, sample, and SES identification, $F(2, 884) = 1.444$, $p = .237$.

There were only significant main effects of sample, $F(1, 884) = 17.261$, $p < .001$, and SES identification, $F(1, 884) = 34.556$, $p < .001$. There was also a marginally significant interaction between sample and SES identification, $F(1, 884) = 3.168$, $p = .075$. This interaction revealed that SES identification positively predicted expected well-being more strongly among Black participants, $b = 0.355$, $SE = 0.066$, $p < .001$, than among White participants, $b = 0.190$, $SE = 0.066$, $p = .004$. Unpacking the interaction the other way indicated that, while Black participants reported higher expected well-being than White participants, this difference was larger at high levels of SES identification, $t(884) = 4.188$, $p < .001$, but weaker and only marginally significant at low levels of SES identification, $t(884) = 1.670$, $p = .095$. The diversity type X SES identification interaction was not significant in either sample, both ps > .369.

Social Identity Threat. For social identity threat, results revealed a marginally significant three-way interaction between diversity type, sample, and SES identification, $F(2, 884) = 2.487$, $p = .084$. There was also a significant main effect of sample, $F(1, 884) = 22.127$, $p < .001$, and a marginally significant interaction between diversity type and sample, $F(2, 884) = 2.932$, $p = .054$.

To unpack the marginally significant three-way interaction, the pairwise comparisons within each sample were examined. Among Black participants with low levels of SES identification, those reading about the SES-diversity school anticipated marginally greater social identity threat than those reading about the racial-diversity school, $t(884) = 1.960$, $p = .050$. No other comparisons were significant in the Black sample, all ps > .238. Among White participants with low levels of SES identification, those reading about the racial-diversity school anticipated marginally greater social identity threat than those reading about the SES-diversity school, $t(884) = 1.942$, $p = .053$. Meanwhile, among White participants with high levels of SES identification,

those reading about the racial-diversity school anticipated greater social identity threat than those reading about the control school, $t(884) = 2.170$, $p = .030$. In other words, White Americans with strong SES identities anticipate more threat at a school that emphasizes racial diversity, while Black Americans with weak SES identities anticipate more threat at a school that emphasizes SES diversity.

Subjective Social Status

Positivity. For positivity, results revealed no significant three-way interaction between diversity type, sample, and subjective social status, $F(2, 884) = 0.094$, $p = .910$. There were only significant main effects of diversity type, $F(2, 884) = 3.565$, $p = .029$, sample, $F(1, 884) = 44.582$, $p < .001$, and subjective social status, $F(1, 884) = 7.060$, $p = .008$. There was also a significant interaction between sample and subjective social status, $F(1, 884) = 5.242$, $p = .022$. This interaction revealed that there was a positive effect of subjective status on positivity only among the Black sample, $b = 0.238$, $SE = 0.067$, $p = .001$, but not the White sample, $p = .793$. Unpacking the interaction the other way indicated that, while Black participants consistently reported higher positivity than White participants, this difference was larger at the higher end of social status, $t(884) = 6.342$, $p < .001$, but was attenuated at the lower end of social status, $t(884) = 3.087$, $p = .002$. The diversity type X subjective social status interaction was not significant in either sample, both ps $> .609$.

Well-being. For expected well-being, results revealed no significant three-way interaction between diversity type, sample, and subjective social status, $F(2, 884) = 0.289$, $p = .749$. There were only significant main effects of sample, $F(1, 884) = 17.703$, $p < .001$, and subjective social status, $F(1, 884) = 18.411$, $p < .001$. There was also a significant interaction between sample and subjective social status, $F(1, 884) = 8.942$, $p = .003$. This interaction

revealed that there was a positive effect of subjective status on expected well-being only among the Black sample, $b = 0.339$, $SE = 0.066$, $p < .001$, but not the White sample, $p = .354$. Decomposed the other way, at low levels of subjective status, the Black and White sample did not differ in their expected well-being, $p = .396$. At high levels of subjective status, the White sample expected lower well-being than the Black sample, $t(884) = -5.094$, $p < .001$. The diversity type X subjective social status interaction was not significant in either sample, both ps > .408.

Social Identity Threat. For social identity threat, results revealed no significant three-way interaction between diversity type, sample, and subjective social status, $F(2, 884) = 1.979$, $p = .139$. There was only a significant main effect of sample, $F(1, 884) = 22.233$, $p < .001$. All three lower-order two-way interactions were also significant, all ps < .038. The diversity type X subjective social status interaction was not significant in the Black sample, $p = .110$, but it was in the White sample, $F(1, 445) = 3.650$, $p = .027$. Specifically, among high-status White participants, those who read about the racial-diversity school reported greater threat than those who read about the control school, $t(445) = 3.124$, $p = .005$. No other contrast reached significance, all ps > .110.

Racial Identification

Positivity. For positivity, results revealed no significant three-way interaction between diversity type, sample, and racial identification, $F(2, 884) = 0.477$, $p = .621$. There were only significant main effects of diversity type, $F(2, 884) = 3.779$, $p = .023$, sample, $F(1, 884) = 45.818$, $p < .001$, and racial identification, $F(1, 884) = 16.874$, $p < .001$. There was also a significant interaction between sample and racial identification, $F(1, 884) = 23.846$, $p < .001$. This interaction revealed that there was a positive effect of racial identification on positivity only

among the Black sample, $b = 0.426$, $SE = 0.067$, $p < .001$, but not the White sample, $p = .582$. Unpacking the interaction the other way indicated that, among participants high in racial identification, Black participants reported higher positivity than White participants, $t(884) = 8.241$, $p < .001$, but this difference was not found at low levels of racial identification, $p = .190$. The diversity type X racial identification interaction was not significant in either sample, both ps > .683.

Well-being. For expected well-being, results revealed no significant three-way interaction between diversity type, sample, and racial identification, $F(2, 884) = 0.927$, $p = .396$. There were only significant main effects of sample, $F(1, 884) = 17.628$, $p < .001$, and racial identification, $F(1, 884) = 7.912$, $p = .005$. There was also a significant interaction between sample and racial identification, $F(1, 884) = 10.748$, $p = .001$. This interaction revealed that there was a positive effect of racial identification on expected well-being only among the Black sample, $b = 0.285$, $SE = 0.066$, $p < .001$, but not the White sample, $p = .741$. Unpacking the interaction the other way indicated that, among participants high in racial identification, Black participants expected higher well-being than White participants, $t(884) = 5.289$, $p < .001$, but this difference was not found at low levels of racial identification, $p = .524$. The diversity type X racial identification interaction was not significant in either sample, both ps > .237.

Social Identity Threat. For social identity threat, results revealed a marginally significant three-way interaction between diversity type, sample, and racial identification, $F(2, 884) = 2.421$, $p = .089$. There were also significant main effects of sample, $F(1, 884) = 20.768$, $p < .001$, and racial identification such that higher racial identification was associated with higher social identity threat at the school in question, $b = 0.296$, $SE = 0.053$, $p < .001$. There was also a

significant interaction between sample and diversity type, $F(2, 884) = 3.786$, $p = .023$, and between sample and racial identification, $F(1, 884) = 3.882$, $p = .049$.

To unpack the marginally significant three-way interaction, the pairwise comparisons within each sample were examined. Among Black participants, none of the comparisons reached significance, all ps > .246. Among White participants, those low in racial identification (i.e., those who weakly identified with being White) reported lower threat at the SES-diversity school than at both the racial diversity school, $t(884) = -2.483$, $p = .013$, and the control school, $t(884) = -2.555$, $p = .011$. They reported the same amount of threat at the racial-diversity school and the control school, $p = .978$. Among White participants high in racial identification (i.e., those who highly identified with being White), both the SES-diversity school, $t(884) = 2.321$, $p = .021$, and the racial-diversity school, $t(884) = 2.559$, $p = .011$, were perceived as more threatening compared to the control school. The SES-diversity school and the racial-diversity school were perceived as equally threatening, $p = .935$. In other words, White Americans who did not identify highly with their race felt least threatened by a school that emphasizes SES diversity, while White Americans who did identify highly with their race felt least threatened by a school that does not mention any kind of demographic diversity.

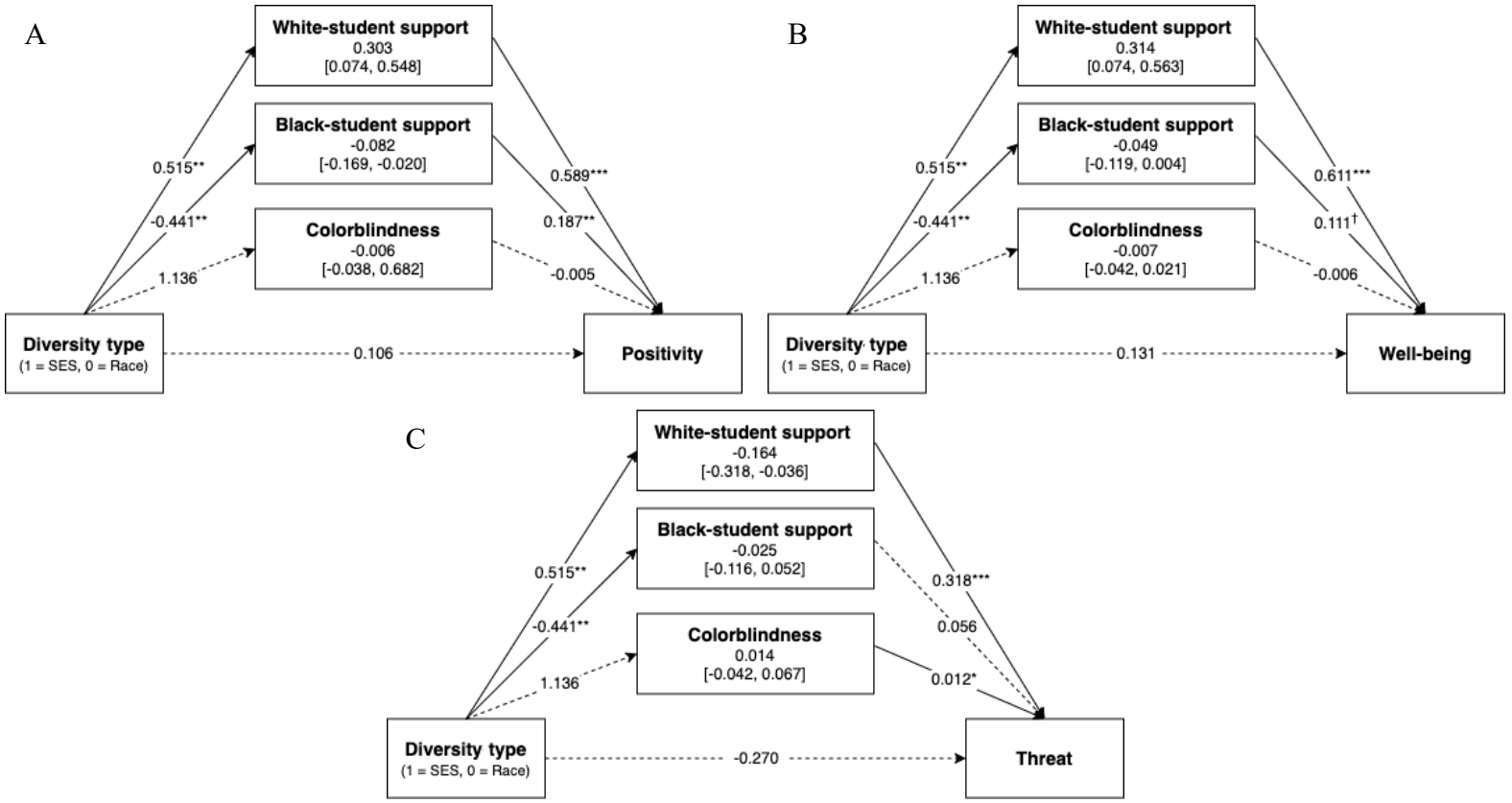
Appendix H

Study 3.2 Mediation in White Participants

Though not central to the hypotheses for Study 3.2, mediation models in the White sample were run to explore whether their differences in anticipated feelings between SES diversity and racial diversity were driven by anticipated ingroup and outgroup representation and expected colorblindness. As reported in the main text, White participants reported descriptively (though not statistically) greater positivity, $b = 0.321$, $SE = 0.166$, $t(890) = 1.938$, $p = .129$, expected greater well-being, $b = 0.390$, $SE = 0.162$, $t(890) = 2.408$, $p = .043$, and anticipated less social-identity threat, $b = -0.444$, $SE = 0.186$, $t(890) = -2.381$, $p = .046$, at the SES-diversity school than the racial-diversity school. As depicted in Figure H1, all of these effects were driven by the perception that SES diversity would provide more support to White students than racial diversity. Perceived support for Black students was also positively associated with reported positivity (Panel A) and marginally with expected well-being (Panel B). However, these indirect effects were either not significant or substantially weaker relative to the indirect effect for perceived White-student support.

Figure H1

Study 3.2 Mediation Analysis in White Participants Testing Indirect Effects of (A) Positivity, (B) Well-being, and (C) Social Identity Threat



Note. Indirect path effects and 95% confidence intervals are indicated in the middle boxes. Dashed lines indicate a non-significant path. SES = socioeconomic status.
***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$. * $p < .05$; † $p < .10$.