

Independent Self-Construal and Opposition to Affirmative Action: The Role of Microjustice and Macrojustice Preferences

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Abstract Why are people with a stronger independent self-construal more opposed to affirmative action than those with a weaker independent self-construal? Drawing on prior research, we predicted that this is because the former endorse microjustice principles—which are perceived to be violated by affirmative action—and disregard macrojustice principles—which affirmative action seeks to ensure. In contrast, people with a weak independent self-construal endorse both microjustice and macrojustice. The results from three studies support our reasoning. Our research contributes to theorizing on affirmative action by illuminating the important role of both microjustice and macrojustice concerns in predicting opposition to affirmative action. We discuss the implications of our research within the North American context for increasing people’s endorsement of macrojustice in an effort to mitigate opposition to social policies aimed at redressing societal injustice.

Keywords Affirmative action · Macrojustice · Microjustice · Independent self-identity · Opposition

Introduction

Women and visible minorities have long suffered injustice due to discrimination. Researchers have investigated various potential remedies, including affirmative action. In brief, the goal of affirmative action is to “eliminate employment discrimination against women and ethnic minorities, and to redress the effects of discrimination” (Kravitz et al., 1997, p. vii). Despite the proactive goal of ending

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discriminatory barriers that have contributed to the under-representation of women and visible minorities in organizations, people's attitudes toward affirmative action remain polarized.

A number of determinants of opposition to affirmative action have been investigated (see Crosby, Iyer, & Sincharoen, 2006, for a recent review), including demographic characteristics, such as gender (e.g., Beaton & Tougas, 2001; Kravitz & Platania, 1993) and race (e.g., Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Kravitz et al., 2000), intrapersonal factors, such as sexism (e.g., Tougas, Brown, Beaton, & Joly, 1995; Tougas, Crosby, Joly, & Pelchat, 1995), racism (e.g., Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, & Zanna, 1998), conservatism (e.g., Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996), ideology (e.g., Aberson & Haag, 2003), social dominance orientation (e.g., Federico & Sidanius, 2002a, b), right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) (Altemeyer, 2006), self-interest (e.g., Kluegel & Smith, 1983), perceptions of discrimination (e.g., Heilman, McCullough, & Gilbert, 1996; Son Hing, Bobocel, & Zanna, 2002), and justice concerns (e.g., Bobocel et al., 1998; Son Hing et al., 2002, 2011).

In the current research, we extend prior investigations on the determinants of opposition by examining the effect of an independent self-construal. In the sections that follow, we first introduce the concept of the independent self. Next, we distinguish between two predominant justice principles, microjustice and macrojustice, used to determine the fairness of resource allocation decisions. We then discuss the relevance of these justice principles for understanding the relation between independent self-construal and opposition to affirmative action. Finally, we present our central hypotheses.

The Independent Self

According to the self-literature (e.g., see Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994; Triandis, 1996), people vary in the extent to which they define the self as individualistic, autonomous, and independent of others and social influences. Individuals with a strong independent self-construal base their self-definition on their unique abilities or attributes and on the importance of distinguishing the self from others. Self-esteem is derived from social dominance, achievement, and seeing oneself as different, and better, than others. These persons give personal goals priority over group goals and their behaviors are determined by personal preferences, rights, convictions, and goals. Individual rights, goals, and wishes are the primary basis for moral choices (e.g., Miller, 1994). When conflict arises, these individuals use dominating conflict styles in which they seek to satisfy and maximize their own interests over the needs of others (e.g., Oetzel, 1998).¹

¹ Although not examined in the current research, people also differ in the extent to which they define the self in terms of their interconnectedness with others—the interdependent self (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Individuals with a strong interdependent self-construal emphasize their relationships, and give group goals priority over individual goals. When studied at the cultural level, independent self-construal (or individualism) and interdependent self-construal (or collectivism) are often treated as opposite poles of a single dimension. However, when considered within person (as in the current research), the

Research has demonstrated the importance of self-construal in directing people's perception, emotion, motivation, and interaction with others (for reviews see, Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). Recently, justice researchers have also theorized about the role of self-identity in people's justice reasoning. For example, Skitka (2003) proposed an accessible identity model (AIM) of justice, which argues that justice reasoning will vary as a function of the aspect of the self that is either chronically accessible or which is activated in a particular situation (also see Clayton & Opatow, 2003).

In line with AIM, a growing literature has shown an influence of self-identity on people's justice judgments and reactions to injustice (e.g., Bobocel & Zdaniuk, 2010; Brockner, De Cremer, van den Bos, & Chen, 2005; Brockner, Chen, Mannix, Leung, & Skarlicki, 2000; Gelfand et al., 2002; Holmvall & Bobocel, 2008). Of particular relevance to the present research, two studies have demonstrated a positive relation between the independent self and the opposition to affirmative action. Ozawa, Crosby, and Crosby (1996) found that, compared to individuals from cultures that emphasize the interdependent self (i.e., Japan), individuals from cultures that emphasize the independent self (i.e., United States) were more opposed to affirmative action as a remedy for discrimination. Extending Ozawa et al.'s (1996) research, Kimmelmeier (2003) examined whether activating individual aspects of the self influenced American's attitudes toward affirmative action. He found that when independent aspects of the self were made salient through a priming technique, Americans were more opposed to affirmative action as a remedy for a hypothetical race discrimination case (Study 1) and more opposed to affirmative action policies as they understood them (Study 2).

Given these findings, an independent self-view is said to be an important determinant of opposition to affirmative action (Kimmelmeier, 2003; Ozawa et al., 1996; see also Crosby, 1994). However, neither Ozawa et al. (1996) nor Kimmelmeier (2003) empirically examined why this is the case. Our primary goal was to extend the prior research by examining why independence is associated with opposition to affirmative action. By understanding why this relation occurs, it might be possible to reduce it.

Although not tested, Ozawa et al. (1996) and Kimmelmeier (2003) argued that strong concerns about upholding meritocracy may explain the positive relation between independence and opposition (see also Crosby, 1994). We agree that within a culture that emphasizes independence, such as North American, most people strongly value meritocracy. However, as outlined more in the next sections, we propose that people with a stronger independent self-view may be more opposed to affirmative action due to *both* their preference for the microjustice principles of meritocracy, which are perceived to be violated by affirmative action, *and* their disregard for the egalitarian macrojustice principles that affirmative action seeks to ensure.

Footnote 1 continued

constructs are conceptually and empirically distinct (e.g., Brewer & Gardner, 1996). That is, a strong independent self-construal is not synonymous with a weak interdependent self-construal, and so on.

Macrojustice Versus Macrojustice Principles

According to Brickman, Folger, Goode, and Schul (1981), people can judge the fairness of an allocation decision using two different justice principles: *microjustice* and *macrojustice* principles. They defined microjustice as “the fairness of rewards to individual recipients,” and macrojustice as “the aggregate fairness of reward in a society” (p. 173). Microjustice is primarily concerned with the match between a person’s contributions or inputs and his or her subsequent rewards or outputs. As such, microjustice requires that people are considered as individuals and evaluated on the basis of their individual attributes (e.g., merit or effort). In contrast, macrojustice discourages consideration of individual attributes. Rather, macrojustice is concerned with the fairness of the aggregate distribution of resources in society, such as guaranteed minimum outcome, or equality for all. The predominant macrojustice principles are egalitarian whereas the predominant microjustice principles are equity-based.² In short, microjustice emphasizes what is fair for the individual whereas macrojustice emphasizes what is fair for society.

Brickman et al. argued that people’s differential attitudes toward affirmative action are one example of the type of conflict that can arise from differential endorsement of microjustice and macrojustice principles. They noted that proponents of affirmative action typically stress macrojustice justice concerns: society has discriminated against members of minority groups in the past, and all members of society should have equal opportunity. In contrast, opponents of affirmative action typically stress microjustice concerns: merit or individual deserving should be the primary criteria used to determine who should get hired or promoted. Given that the debate over affirmative action can be conceptualized as deriving from a tension between microjustice and macrojustice principles, researchers may better understand the determinants of opposition by considering factors that influence people’s general endorsement of macrojustice and microjustice principles. We suggest that independent self-construal is one such factor.

Independent Self-Construal and Endorsement of Macrojustice and Microjustice Principles

In terms of macrojustice, we reasoned that the stronger people’s independent self-construal, the less likely they are to conceive of justice as including macrojustice concerns. According to Brickman et al. (1981), the general cause of a macrojustice orientation is “high degree of awareness of the group as a collective whole, or a broad degree of identification with other group members in general” (p. 196). Given that individuals with a strong independent self-construal strive to gain independent success and distinction, and give preference to individual over group goals (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991), we reasoned that they will not have the necessary

² Following Brickman et al. (1981) and Sinclair and Mark (1991) we use the term egalitarian to mean a preference for equality and a disregard for inequality rather than to mean absolute equality of outcomes. We use this conceptualization given that non-egalitarian macrojustice principles are possible but rare.

degree of collective awareness to raise a concern with macrojustice. Moreover, individuals with a strong independent self-construal emphasize achievement and ability (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Spence, 1985); as such, they should be less likely to endorse macrojustice principles because these strip away such individuating information in resource allocation. Thus, overall we expected that the strength of people's independent self-construal would be inversely related to their endorsement of macrojustice.

In terms of microjustice principles, intuitively one might expect a positive association with independent self-construal. In fact, this was assumed to be the case in the research described earlier (i.e., Kimmelmeier, 2003; Ozawa et al., 1996) in which it was argued that opposition to affirmative action by those with a stronger independent self-definition is due to their greater endorsement of meritocracy (a microjustice principle). We agree that people with a stronger independent self-construal may value the microjustice principle of meritocracy because it is consistent with core-aspects of the self. However, we suggest that, within North America, people with a weaker independent self-construal may *also* value meritocracy for different reasons. Namely, when research is conducted in an individualistic culture (such as North America) in which principles of microjustice, such as meritocracy, are highly salient and generally strongly valued, it follows that endorsement of microjustice should be relatively high regardless of one's level of independent self-construal.

Taken together, our analysis suggests that individuals with a strong independent self-construal have a unidimensional conception of justice compared to those with a weak independent self-construal. For those with a strong independent self-construal, justice concerns are primarily founded in microjustice considerations; thus, these individuals should be sensitive to violations to microjustice but not to violations to macrojustice. In contrast, for those with a weak independent self-construal, fairness is a function of both microjustice and macrojustice considerations; thus, these individuals should be sensitive to violations to both microjustice and macrojustice.

Overview of the Present Research

Although a variety of conceptualizations of affirmative action exist, arguably the most controversial policy involves preferential treatment (PT) of target-group members based on race or sex (e.g., Kravitz, 1995). Drawing on the distinction between microjustice and macrojustice, the PT policy upholds macrojustice principles because it seeks to ensure the representation of target-group members in organizations, but it violates microjustice principles because relatively less qualified target-group members could be hired or promoted before potentially better qualified non-target-group members (Brickman et al., 1981). Given that the PT policy seeks to ensure macrojustice at the expense of microjustice, the PT policy violates the strongly independent person's sense of justice. Thus, we expected that individuals with a strong independent self-construal should oppose the PT policy. In contrast, because individuals with a weak independent self-construal have a

preference for both macrojustice and microjustice, the PT policy does not violate their sense of justice. Thus, we expected that they should be less opposed.

Furthermore, in line with the above reasoning, we expected that the effect of independent self-construal on opposition to the PT policy would be mediated by relatively lesser endorsement of macrojustice principles by strongly independent people. As noted earlier, we did not expect mediation via greater endorsement of microjustice: to the extent that everyone (regardless of the strength of independence) endorses microjustice within the North American culture, there should be no significant difference in endorsement of microjustice as a function of self-construal.

An additional goal of the current research was to examine whether the positive effect of independent self-construal on opposition might be mitigated by a policy that satisfies both macrojustice and microjustice concerns simultaneously. Following Bobocel et al. (1998), we refer to this as the Tie policy. Similar to the PT policy, we conceptualized the Tie policy as upholding macrojustice principles because it seeks to ensure the representation of target-group members in organizations. However, unlike the PT policy, the Tie policy does not violate microjustice principles because all the candidates are equally qualified. Thus, whereas the PT policy places conflict between microjustice and macrojustice concerns, the Tie policy does not.

Given that the Tie policy upholds both justice principles whereas the PT policy upholds only principles of macrojustice, we expected people within the North American culture to be overall less opposed to the Tie policy than to the PT policy, consistent with past research (e.g., Bobocel et al., 1998; Heilman, Battle, Keller, & Lee, 1998; Kravitz, 1995; Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Nosworthy, Lea, & Lindsay, 1995). Furthermore, we did not expect a significant relation between independent self-construal and opposition to the Tie, because the policy upholds a sense of justice among both those with a weaker independent self-construal and those with a stronger independent self-construal.

An important overarching goal of the current research was to demonstrate the unique, or incremental effect, of independent self-construal on opposition to affirmative action over and above known predictors. Therefore, in Studies 1 and 3, we also measured and controlled for the effect of a number of potential third variables. In an effort to examine a broad range of variables, we generally used different control variables in different studies. We present more detail on the control variables in the relevant studies.

A summary of hypotheses tested in Studies 1–3 is presented in Fig. 1. As shown, Study 1 provides a test of the predictor–criterion path. Study 2 tests the predictor–mediator path. Finally, Study 3 replicates both Studies 1 and 2 and extends by providing a complete test of the mediation model.

Study 1

In Study 1, we investigated the relation between independent self-construal and opposition to the PT and Tie policies using a psychologically involving laboratory study. As outlined earlier, we expected people to be overall less opposed to the Tie policy than to the PT policy (Hypothesis 1). Furthermore, we expected a positive relation between independent self-construal and opposition to the PT policy

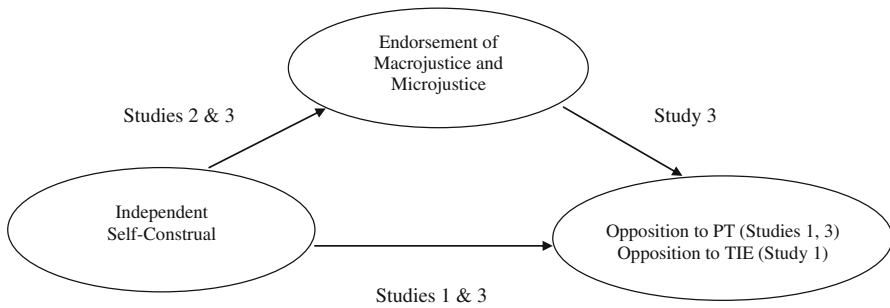


Fig. 1 Summary of the hypotheses examined in Studies 1–3

(Hypothesis 2a). However, we did not expect self-construal to predict opposition to the Tie policy (Hypothesis 2b).

Method

Participants and Design

Sixty-six undergraduate psychology students (33 males and 33 females; M age = 17.83, SD = 3.11) from a midsized North American university participated for course credit. Ethnicity was as follows: Caucasian or White (55%), Asian (28%), East Indian (12%), Black (2%), and missing (3%). Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: type of policy (PT vs. Tie).

Procedure

Assessment of Independent Self-Construal Independent self-construal was measured as part of a mass-testing questionnaire (with unrelated measures), completed by students approximately 1 month prior to participation. We used Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gelfand's (1995) 16-item scale. Higher scale scores reflect a stronger independent self-construal.

Main Study We used the paradigm from Bobocel et al. (1998). A random sample of participants who had completed Singelis et al.'s measure was telephoned and invited to participate in a study for a company called Cochrane Industries. On arrival, the experimenter told participants that she was a student [from their university] on a work term placement at Cochrane, and that prior to their implementation of an affirmative policy, Cochrane wished to gauge reactions to different types of programs. To enhance experimental realism, participants were told that Cochrane Industries would be considering their opinions, as potential employees of the future, when making their decision about how to implement their affirmative action policy.

Participants participated in groups of two to six. To bolster our cover story and reduce suspicion that this was a study, the study took place in a room outside the psychology building, and the experimenter (a White female) was dressed in business attire.

Participants first read an article titled “Decisions Ahead of Us.” The article stated that Cochrane Industries was investigating and considering a number of affirmative action policies that had ostensibly been implemented by other companies. They would offer their opinions on a policy implemented by one particular organization (referred to as Corporation A). The details of the policy constituted the experimental manipulation: half of the participants read a description of a preferential treatment policy, whereas the other half read a description of a Tie policy (for details see *Policy Manipulation* section). After reading the article and policy description, participants completed a number of questions (see “[Measures](#)” section). Finally, they were thanked, probed for suspicion, and debriefed.

Policy Manipulation

Preferential Treatment Policy. In this condition, participants read:

Corporation A’s affirmative action policy seeks to ensure that target-group members (e.g., women, visible minorities, and the physically challenged) are not underrepresented in the organization (relative to the demographic make-up of the applicant pool). When considering employees for hiring and promotion, a new procedure is used with Corporation A’s affirmative action policy. A minimum, yet adequate, qualification level for each position has been set. The most qualified applicant above this level receives the available position unless there are any target-group members (e.g., women, visible minorities, and the physically challenged) above the minimum qualification level. In this case, the target-group applicant is selected before a potentially better qualified non-target group employee.

Tie Policy. In this condition, participants read:

Corporation A’s affirmative action policy seeks to ensure that target-group members (e.g., women, visible minorities, and the physically challenged) are not underrepresented in the organization (relative to the demographic make-up of the applicant pool). This policy has altered Corporation A’s hiring and promotion policies. If there is an instance in which there are equally qualified candidates competing for a position, preference is given to target-group members. This policy gives women, visible minorities, and the physically challenged an advantage; however, it does not mean that a target-group member with relatively weaker qualifications would be hired or promoted before a more qualified White male. Rather, consideration is given to group membership only when candidates for positions are equally qualified.

Measures

Perceptions of the Policy as Upholding/Violating Macrojustice and Microjustice Principles To assess participants’ perceptions of the policy as macrojustice and

microjustice upholding or violating, they were asked the following two questions, respectively: “Under Corporation A’s policy, what is the likelihood that target-group members (e.g., women and visible minorities) will be adequately represented in the organization (relative to the demographic make-up of the applicant pool)?” and “Under Corporation A’s policy, what is the likelihood that the most deserving (or meritorious) candidate would be hired or promoted?” The items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *extremely unlikely*, 7 = *extremely likely*).

Attitudes Toward the Policies Attitudes toward the policies were assessed with two items: “What is your opinion of Corporation A’s affirmative action policy?” (1 = *extremely unfavorable*, 7 = *extremely favorable*) and “If you had the opportunity, to what extent would you like to work at Cochrane Industries?” (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). The items were combined and re-coded such that higher scores reflect more opposition.

Control Variables We controlled for the possible effects of variables that are either theoretically or empirically associated with independent self-control, opposition, or both. First, we controlled for *race* (target-group member vs. non-target group member) and *gender* given research indicating that men and individuals from Western cultures have a stronger independent self-identity than women and individuals from Eastern cultures (e.g., Cross & Madson, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis et al., 1995). As discussed in the “Introduction,” gender and race have also been linked to opposition to affirmative action.³

Second, we controlled for the role of important dispositional predictors previously shown to predict opposition. We assessed *RWA* using Altemeyer’s (1981) scale, and *prejudice*. For the latter, we assessed both sexism and racism. Sexism was measured with Swim, Aikin, Hall, and Hunter’s (1995) Modern Sexism Scale. Racism was measured with a modified version of McConahay’s (1986) Modern Racism Scale (Bobocel et al., 1998). A composite of prejudice was formed by averaging respondents’ standardized scores. Higher scores reflect greater prejudice.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

As expected, a two-group one-way ANOVA showed that participants perceived the Tie and PT policies as upholding macrojustice equally ($M = 4.88$ vs. 5.16 ; $SD = 1.01$ vs. $.97$, for the Tie and PT policies, respectively), $F(1,63) = 1.29$, $p > .10$. However, they perceived the Tie policy ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.65$) as upholding microjustice more than the PT policy ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.43$), $F(1,63) = 19.86$, $p < .001$.

³ Neither gender nor race moderated the relation between independent self-construal and opposition in Studies 1 and 3 ($ps > .10$), indicating that the effect of independent self-construal on opposition is similar for men versus women, and for target-group members versus non-target-group members.

We followed up the ANOVA with regression analyses to examine potential differences on the manipulation check items as a function of independent self-construal. The analyses revealed that independent self-construal did not moderate the effect of program on participants' perceptions of the policies as upholding macrojustice and microjustice (both $ps > .10$). These non-significant findings indicate that everyone perceived the policies similarly, and as intended.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the study variables, across policy conditions. As shown, independent self-construal was significantly associated with gender, such that male participants had a stronger independent self-construal than female participants. Consistent with past research (e.g., Bobo, 1998; Tougas, Crosby, et al., 1995), there was a positive correlation between prejudice and opposition. Race was also significantly associated with opposition, such that non-target-group members were more opposed to the policies than target-group members. Finally, the positive correlation between RWA and independent self-construal was marginally significant.

Test of Hypotheses 1 and 2a/b

To examine the effect of policy on attitudes, we conducted a two-group ANOVA. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, participants were less opposed to the Tie policy than to the PT policy ($M = 3.94$ vs. 4.70 ; $SD = 1.66$ vs. 1.33 , respectively), $F(1,64) = 4.16$, $p < .05$.

We conducted a hierarchical regression analysis to test the predicted two-way interaction between independent self-construal and policy on opposition. As recommended by Aiken and West (1991), independent self-construal was centered before computing the interaction term. Policy was effect coded (Tie = -1 , PT = 1). In the first step, we entered the control variables. Next, we entered the main effect of independent self-construal, the main effect of policy, and the

Table 1 Study 1: descriptive statistics and intercorrelations (across policy condition)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Independent self-construal	4.83	.67	(.76)					
2. Opposition	4.28	1.54	.15	(.61)				
3. Prejudice	.41	.91	-.07	.32**	(.72)			
4. RWA	4.46	1.16	.21 [†]	-.11	.27*	(.92)		
5. Gender	.50	.50	-.26*	-.23 [†]	-.35**	-.06	–	
6. Race	.55	.50	-.07	.36**	.17	-.22 [†]	-.05	–

Note $N = 66$. Gender was dummy coded (males = 0 and females = 1). Race was also dummy coded (target-group-members = 0 and non-target-group members = 1). Higher scores on the continuous variables reflect more of the construct. The prejudice composite was created by first standardizing scores on each of the sexism and MR scales, then averaging scores. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities are shown on the diagonal

RWA right wing authoritarianism

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, [†] $p \leq .09$

Table 2 Study 1: standardized regression coefficients for the hierarchical regression analysis predicting opposition from independent self-construal

Predictor	Step 1	Step 2
Participant gender	-.17	-.11
Race	.30*	.26*
Prejudice	.24	.33*
RWA	-.12	-.22
Independent self-construal		.29*
Policy condition		.23*
Independent self-construal \times condition		.24*
R^2	.23*	.36*
ΔR^2		.13*
ΔF	4.59*	3.87*

Note $N = 66$. Policy condition was effect coded (Tie = -1 and PT = 1). Gender was dummy coded (males = 0 and females = 1). Race was also dummy coded (target-group-members = 0 and non-target-group members = 1). The prejudice composite was created by first standardizing scores on each of the sexism and MR scales, then averaging scores. Higher scores on the continuous variables reflect more of the construct. R^2 for the full model with control variables = .59

RWA right wing authoritarianism

* $p \leq .05$

interaction term (see Table 2). As in the ANOVA above, a main effect of policy emerged. A main effect of independent self-construal also emerged, such that the stronger the participants independent self-construal, the greater their opposition to the policies. However, as expected, a significant interaction between self-construal and policy emerged. As seen in Fig. 2, consistent with Hypothesis 2a, there was a significant effect of self-construal on opposition to the PT policy, such that the stronger participants' independent self-construal, the more they were opposed, $\beta = .53$, $p < .01$, R^2 for the full model = .45, $p < .05$. In contrast, there was a non-significant relation between independent self-construal and opposition to the Tie policy, $\beta = .05$, $p > .10$, supporting Hypothesis 2b.

Discussion

In support of Hypothesis 1, we found that overall people were less opposed to the Tie than the PT policy. In line with Hypothesis 2a, the stronger the people's independent self-construal, the greater their opposition to the PT policy. It is noteworthy that individuals' self-construal have an *incremental effect* over and above several variables, thereby ruling out a number of possible alternative explanations. Additionally, in support of Hypothesis 2b, independent self-construal did not predict opposition to the Tie policy. Together, our findings suggest that when a policy violates microjustice to ensure macrojustice, as in the PT policy, individuals with a strong independent self-construal are more opposed than individuals with a weak independent self-construal. However, when a policy upholds both microjustice and macrojustice, as in the Tie policy, greater opposition

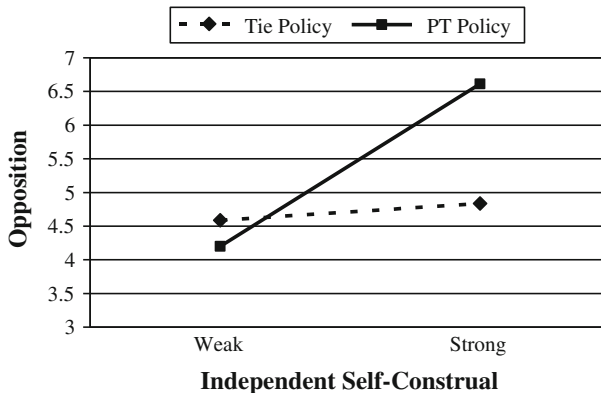


Fig. 2 The interactive effect of independent self-construal (weak vs. strong) and policy (Tie vs. PT) on opposition in Study 1. For independent self-construal, weak = -1 *SD* below the mean, centered at zero; strong = $+1$ *SD* above the mean. $N = 66$

to affirmative action among individuals with a strong independent self-construal is mitigated.

Study 2

In Study 2, working adults were assessed on the strength of their independent self-construal, as well as their endorsement of macrojustice and microjustice principles. We had several goals. First, we sought to demonstrate that within the North American culture, people will endorse microjustice principles more than macrojustice principles overall, and there will be less variability in the former than the latter (Hypothesis 3). Second, we sought to examine the association between independent self-construal and endorsement of macrojustice and microjustice. For the reasons outlined earlier, we predicted that independent self-construal will be negatively related to endorsement of macrojustice principles (Hypothesis 4a). We expected a non-significant association between independent self-construal and endorsement of microjustice principles (Hypothesis 4b).

Method

Participants and Overview of Procedures

Participants were 240 employees, employed in a variety of organizations, recruited at random from a database of alumni at a midsized North American university (115 males and 125 females; M age = 39.35, $SD = 9.64$). Ethnicity was as follows: Caucasian or White (88%), Asian (8%), Black (.5%), East Indian (.5%), Middle Eastern (.5%), and missing (2.5%). Thirty-eight percent completed a post-graduate or professional degree, and 18% were unionized. Forty-five percent were in

management positions; of these, 28% were in entry-level management, 47% in middle-level management, and 25% in upper-level management.

Measures

Independent Self-Constraint To keep the survey brief, in Study 2 we used a subset of items from Singelis et al.'s (1995) measure, which were most relevant theoretically for our purposes. Singelis et al.'s measure contains two dimensions: horizontal and vertical independence. Individuals with a strong *horizontal* independent self-construal define the self as autonomous, and as relatively equal in status with others. Individuals with a strong *vertical* independent self-construal also define the self as autonomous, but they emphasize hierarchy, and accept the existence of inequalities among people. We assessed the vertical dimension in Study 2 given that it is people who score high on vertical individualism who are particularly likely to accept inequalities among people, which group-based remedial policies, such as affirmative action, seek to remove. The vertical dimension contains 8 items ($\alpha = .79$).

Endorsement of Macrojustice and Microjustice Principles We assessed people's endorsement of macrojustice and microjustice principles in three domains: income, jobs, and promotions. The scale contained 15 items, eight to assess macrojustice and seven to assess microjustice (see "Appendix"). The items within the domain of *income* were drawn from Sinclair and Mark (1991); the items within the domains of *jobs* and *promotions* were developed for the present research, using Brickman et al.'s (1981) theoretical distinctions of macrojustice and microjustice principles. All items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Higher scale scores reflect greater endorsement of macrojustice ($\alpha = .78$) and microjustice ($\alpha = .68$).

Results and Discussion

In support of Hypothesis 3, a paired-samples *t* test revealed overall greater endorsement of microjustice ($M = 5.32$, $SD = .82$) than macrojustice principles ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.11$), $t(239) = 12.86$, $p < .001$. Moreover, a comparison of the standard deviations for each measure revealed significantly less variability in the endorsement of microjustice than macrojustice, $F(1, 240) = 1.83$, $p < .001$.

Consistent with Hypothesis 4a, the stronger the employees' independent self-construal, the less they endorsed macrojustice principles, $r(240) = -.32$, $p < .001$. In support of Hypothesis 4b, we found a non-significant association between independent self-construal and endorsement of microjustice, $r(240) = .10$, $p > .10$. Also, as expected from a theoretical perspective (e.g., Brickman et al., 1981; Sinclair & Mark, 1991), responses to the microjustice and macrojustice scales were uncorrelated, $r(240) = -.12$, $p > .10$.

The results thus confirm that (a) within the North American culture endorsement of microjustice is greater (and less variable) than macrojustice and (b) individuals with a stronger independent self-construal are less likely to endorse the macrojustice

principles that affirmative action policies seek to ensure. In Study 3, we examined whether this lesser endorsement of macrojustice among individuals with a strong independent self-construal mediates their greater opposition to the PT policy when compared to those with a weak independent self-construal.

Study 3

Working adults were assessed on the strength of their independent self-construal and on their endorsement of macrojustice and microjustice principles. Then at a later date, employees were asked to provide their attitudes toward the PT policy. The goals of Study 3 were to (a) replicate Hypothesis 2 with working adults, and (b) extend Studies 1 and 2 by examining the mediating roles of employees' endorsement of macrojustice and microjustice. In line with our earlier reasoning, we expected that the effect of independent self-construal on opposition would be mediated by lesser endorsement of macrojustice rather than by greater endorsement of microjustice (Hypothesis 5). We also sought to provide a replication of Hypotheses 3 and 4a/b.

Method

Participants and Overview of Procedures

A random sample of alumni from a midsized North American university was invited by email to participate in a two-part web-based survey. Participants were told that we were examining attitudes toward workplace policies and that their responses would be used to inform organizations of what policies employees perceive as fair and unfair. In Part 1, participants completed a demographic questionnaire, as well as measures to assess the predictor variable, and the macrojustice and microjustice mediator variables. In Part 2 (completed approximately 1 week later), participants were told that they were randomly assigned to evaluate a selection policy. In fact, all participants read a description of a PT policy (very similar to that in Study 1), and completed a questionnaire containing measures pertaining to the policy.

One hundred and forty-three employees completed Part 1 of the survey; of these, 100 also completed Part 2 (55 males and 45 females; M age = 41.11, SD = 10.81). Ethnicity was as follows: Caucasian or White (89%), and Asian (11%). Thirty-eight percent completed a post-graduate or professional degree, and 23% were members of a union. Forty-seven percent were in management positions; of these, 23% were in entry-level management, 45% in middle-level management, and 32% in upper-level management.

Measures

Independent Self-Construal Self-construal was assessed as in Study 2.

Endorsement of Macrojustice and Microjustice Endorsement of macrojustice principles and microjustice principles was assessed using the same scales as in Study 2.

Perceptions of the Policy as Upholding/Violating Macrojustice and Microjustice Principles Perceptions of the policy as macrojustice and microjustice upholding or violating were assessed as in Study 1.

Attitudes Toward the Policy Attitudes toward the policy were assessed with three items: “What is your opinion of this selection policy?” (1 = *very favorable*, 7 = *very unfavorable*), “If you had the opportunity, how likely is it that you would recommend this selection policy to your organization?” (1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*), and “How do you feel about this selection policy?” (1 = *very positively*, 7 = *very negatively*). The items were combined and re-coded such that higher scores reflect more opposition.

Control Variables As in Study 1, we controlled for the effects of participants’ race (non-target-group member vs. target-group member) and gender. We also controlled two additional variables that have been previously associated with opposition to affirmative action. The first was *self-interest*, assessed with the item: “If your organization implemented this selection policy, to what extent would this policy alter job opportunities for you?” (1 = *It would adversely affect my job opportunities*, 7 = *It would positively affect my job opportunities*). The item was reverse coded, such that higher numbers reflect greater perceived adverse consequences. The second was *perceptions of discrimination* against women and ethnic minorities, occurring at personal (i.e., individual) and at the systemic (i.e., organizational) levels, assessed with four items from Bobocel et al. (1998; also see, Son Hing et al., 2002).

Results and Discussion

Preliminary Results

As expected, participants perceived the PT policy as upholding macrojustice more than microjustice ($M = 5.31$ vs. 2.46 ; $SD = 1.27$ vs. 1.24 , respectively), $t(99) = -14.53$, $p > .001$. Importantly, independent self-construal was not significantly correlated with perceptions of the policy as macrojustice or microjustice upholding, $r_s(100) = -.09$, and $-.12$, respectively. Thus, everyone perceived the policy similarly, regardless of self-construal.

Table 3 gives the descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the variables.

As shown, independent self-construal was significantly associated with gender, such that male participants had a stronger independent self-construal than female participants. Moreover, there was a significant positive relation between self-construal and self-interest, such that the stronger the participants’ independent self-construal, the more they perceived the PT policy as adversely affecting their job opportunities.

Test of Hypothesis 3

As in Study 2, to test Hypothesis 3 we conducted a paired-samples t test. Once again, the results revealed that overall participants endorsed microjustice

Table 3 Study 3: descriptive statistics and intercorrelations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Independent self-construal	3.50	1.08	(.80)							
2. Macrojustice	3.83	1.20	-.26*	(.81)						
3. Microjustice	5.44	.80	.15	-.05	(.65)					
4. Opposition	6.01	1.05	.24*	-.40***	.28**	(.87)				
5. Gender	.45	.50	-.32**	.22*	-.07	-.15	–			
6. Race	.89	.31	-.10	.08	-.09	.17	-.07	–	–	
7. Self-interest	4.30	1.79	.23*	-.13	.03	.11	-.65***	.29**	–	
8. Perceived discrimination	2.86	1.33	.10	-.10	-.05	.14	-.06	.02	.03	(.73)

Note $N = 100$. Gender was dummy coded (males = 0 and females = 1). Race was also dummy coded (target-group-members = 0 and non-target-group members = 1). Higher scores on the continuous variables reflect more of the construct; for the self-interest variable, higher scores reflect greater perceived adverse consequences. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities are shown on the diagonal

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

($M = 5.44$, $SD = .80$) more than macrojustice ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.20$), $t(98) = 10.85$, $p < .001$. As before, there was also less variability in people's endorsement of the former than the latter, $F(1,100) = 2.25$, $p < .001$.

Test of Hypotheses 2, 4a/b, and 5

Following the procedures outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986), we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses to test the complete mediation model proposed in Hypotheses 2, 4a/b, and 5 (see Fig. 3). In the mediation analyses, we control for gender, race, self-interest, and perceptions of discrimination, as discussed earlier.

As shown in panel (a) of Fig. 3, consistent with Hypothesis 2, the direct effect between independent self-construal and opposition was significant. Further, the link between independent self-construal and endorsement of macrojustice was significant, indicating support for Hypothesis 4a. Finally, in support of Hypothesis 5, whereas direct effect between independent self-construal and opposition was significant, the effect is no longer significant when endorsement of macrojustice was controlled. As an additional step, we tested the significance of the indirect effect using Goodman's (1960) method. The results are in line with mediation $z = 2.01$, $p < .05$. Thus, the data are consistent with the notion that the relation between independent self-construal and opposition is mediated by lesser endorsement of macrojustice.

As shown in panel (b), there is little support for the mediating role of endorsement of microjustice. First, the effect of independent self-identity on opposition did not differ statistically before and after endorsement of microjustice was controlled ($z = 1.46$, $p > .10$). Further, although the link between endorsement of microjustice and opposition was significant, in support of Hypothesis 4b, the link

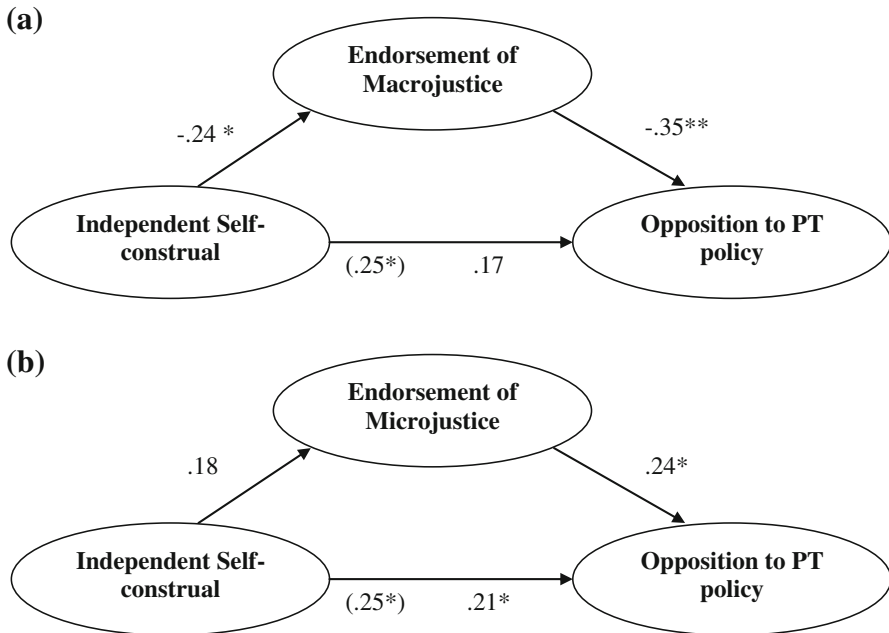


Fig. 3 Path analyses in Study 3 depicting the mediating roles of **a** endorsement of macrojustice principles, and **b** endorsement of microjustice principles in the link between independent self-construal and opposition to the preferential treatment (PT) policy. The numbers on the paths are betas, controlling for the effects of race, gender, self-interest, and perceptions of discrimination. In each path diagram, the direct effect of independent self-construal on opposition is given inside the parentheses; the indirect effect (controlling for the respective mediator) is given outside the parentheses. $N = 99$. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$

between independent self-identity and endorsement of microjustice was non-significant.

General Discussion

The findings of the current research support our five hypotheses. In Study 1, we found that people are more opposed to the PT policy which places conflict between microjustice and macrojustice principles than the Tie policy which satisfies microjustice and macrojustice concerns simultaneously. Our finding that the strength of people’s opposition to affirmative varies as a function of policy type is consistent with prior research demonstrating that attitudes toward affirmative action are highly influenced by how the policy is described and understood (e.g., Bobocel et al., 1998; Heilman et al., 1998; Kravitz & Platania, 1993; Nosworthy et al., 1995; see also Crosby et al., 2006).

Consistent with prior research (Kimmelmeier, 2003; Ozawa et al., 1996), we found (Studies 1 and 3) that independent self-construal predicted opposition to the PT policy, such that the stronger people’s independence, the greater their opposition. As expected, however, independent self-construal did not predict

opposition to the Tie policy (Study 1). Together, our findings suggest that when a policy violates microjustice to ensure macrojustice, individuals with a strong independent self-construal are more opposed than individuals with a weak independent self-construal. However, when a policy upholds microjustice and macrojustice concerns simultaneously, the greater opposition to affirmative action among individuals with a strong independent self-construal is mitigated.

In Studies 2 and 3, we found that, overall, working adults are more likely to endorse microjustice than macrojustice principles and that there is greater agreement in people's endorsement of former than the latter. Additionally, we found that independent self-construal predicted lesser endorsement of macrojustice principles, but not greater endorsement of microjustice principles. Taken together, these findings support the notion that, within North America, principles of microjustice are highly salient and generally strongly valued, relative to macrojustice principles.

Finally, in Study 3 we found evidence for our mediation hypothesis. The data suggest that individuals with a stronger independent self-construal are more opposed to the PT policy (compared to those with a weaker independent self-construal), because the former disregard the macrojustice principles the policy seeks to ensure. Although, as expected, we did not find that endorsement of microjustice mediated the effect of independent self-construal on opposition to the PT policy, our findings indicate that microjustice concerns are nevertheless also important in understanding attitudes toward affirmative action. Specifically, compared to weak independents, individuals with a strong independent self-construal were more opposed to the PT policy (which violates microjustice) than the Tie policy (which upholds microjustice), which indicates that they are indeed sensitive to violations of microjustice. However, within a culture in which principles of microjustice are generally strongly valued by everyone, it is the lesser endorsement of macrojustice that explains why independence predicts opposition.

Strengths and Limitations of the Research

We used a multi-study approach to test our hypotheses. Study 1 replicates prior research (Kemmelmeyer, 2003; Ozawa et al., 1996) that has demonstrated an association between independence and opposition using a different methodology and sample, and it extends this work by demonstrating the moderating role of policy type. Study 2 builds on Study 1 by providing initial support for the theorized link between our predictor and proposed mediator variables. Study 3 brings together Studies 1 and 2 by providing a complete test of the proposed mediation model. Thus, a major strength of the current research lies in our replication and extension of the primary effect of interest. Moreover, because we utilized different methods and samples we can be more assured of the generalizability of the findings. Finally, our research has high experimental and mundane realism. In both Studies 1 and 3 in which participants reported their attitudes toward affirmative action, they believed they were providing input into a real organizational decision.

It is also noteworthy that we ruled out a number of alternative explanations by controlling third variables. In Study 1, we controlled gender, race, prejudice, and RWA; in Study 3, we again controlled gender, race, and added self-interest, and perceptions of discrimination. Thus, our conclusions pertaining to the role of independent self-construal are not instead due to race, gender, RWA, prejudice, self-interest, or perceptions of discrimination. We further enhanced internal validity by assessing the predictor and criterion at different times.

Despite these strengths, several limitations are noteworthy. One pertains to the slightly lower reliability on the microjustice scale, compared to the macrojustice scale in Studies 2 and 3. However, given that Cronbach's alpha coefficient is highly influenced by item variance, it is likely that alpha was attenuated due to the lower variance observed on the items. In such a case, the true reliability of the scale is likely to be underestimated by alpha (e.g., Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2010). A second limitation is that the correlation between independent self-construal and microjustice may have been attenuated due to the slightly lower reliability of the microjustice scale. Although this is possible, it is unlikely given that endorsement of microjustice was correlated significantly with opposition in Study 3.

Third, the data in Study 3 are consistent with the idea that the effect of independent self-construal on opposition is mediated by lesser endorsement of macrojustice, but a firm conclusion regarding causality is not possible because the predictor and the mediator were measured concurrently. However, theorists have conceptualized self-construal as a broader more distal construct that influences a number of more specific and proximal cognitions, emotions, and motivations, such as justice conceptions (e.g., Clayton & Opatow, 2003; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Skitka, 2003). Thus, theoretically justice conceptions rather than self-construal are more likely to be the mediator.

Finally, we examined the effect of independent self-construal on opposition in a North American culture, which promotes an individualistic self-construal; therefore, it is important to examine the generalizability to Eastern cultures, which promote a collectivistic self-construal. By our analysis, the results may differ across culture. That is, that within a collectivistic culture where people generally strongly endorse equalitarian distribution principles (e.g., Leung and Bond, 1984; Mahler, Greenberg, & Hayashi, 1981), it is possible that greater endorsement of microjustice (rather than lesser endorsement of macrojustice) would mediate the effect of independence on opposition to preferential treatment.

Implications and Future Research

Our research has several important broader implications for the literature. First, it provides empirical support for Brickman et al.'s (1981) contention that concerns for macrojustice principles can be important in understanding people's justice-based opposition to affirmative action. To date much of the empirical research examining justice-based opposition has focused on understanding people's microjustice (i.e., merit-based) concerns (e.g., Bobocel et al., 1998; Heilman et al., 1996; Kravitz,

1995; Leck, Saunders, & Charbonneau, 1996; Nosworthy et al., 1995; Sidanius et al., 1996; Son Hing et al., 2002).

Second, our data contribute to a growing body of studies that examine the connection between people's self-identity and justice processes (e.g., Brockner et al., 2000; De Cremer & Tyler, 2005; Johnson, Selenta, & Lord, 2006; Tyler & Blader, 2003). For example, our findings support Skitka's (2003) AIM by demonstrating that individual differences in the chronic accessibility of the independent self-influence people's conceptions of justice. Whereas individuals with a weak independent self have a multi-dimensional conception, including both microjustice and macrojustice concerns, individuals with a strong independent self have a more unidimensional conception of justice, which includes the endorsement of microjustice and a disregard for macrojustice.

Third, given our finding that lesser endorsement of macrojustice predicted opposition to the PT policy, the current research suggests that one-way organizations and policy makers may garner support for such policies is to raise people's endorsement of macrojustice principles. Although empirical research examining the causes of a macrojustice orientation is scarce, Sinclair and Mark (1991) found that inducing a positive mood led to greater endorsement of macrojustice. They theorized that a positive mood may elicit thoughts about the basic similarity of all people, increasing categorization breadth, and subsequent endorsement of macrojustice.

Brickman et al. (1981) theorized that people may endorse macrojustice principles more when "their microjustice alternatives are perceived to be biased, invalid, or corrupt" (p. 197). Thus, one way to increase the endorsement of macrojustice might be to highlight the potential inadequacy and bias in current microjustice-based social policies. In support of this idea, Son Hing et al. (2002) found that when individuals who strongly endorse meritocracy perceived that target-group members' merits were inaccurately assessed due to discrimination, they were less opposed to a PT policy because they perceived the policy as *restoring* meritocracy (also see Son Hing et al., 2011). Thus, future research could examine whether perceptions of discrimination might raise people's desire for macrojustice by making salient bias in current microjustice-based policies.

Various situational factors in organizations that increase people's identification with the collective might also foster greater endorsement of macrojustice. For example, given that transformational or charismatic leadership transforms "the needs, values, preferences, and aspirations of followers from self-interests to collective interests" (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993, p. 577), transformational leaders may increase the salience of macrojustice, and people's subsequent endorsement of these principles.

Conclusion

Individuals who define themselves as unique and separate from others—those with a strong independent self-construal—oppose preferential treatment affirmative action because they conceive of justice in terms of microjustice but not macrojustice. Our

data suggest that by broadening people's conceptions of justice to include both macrojustice and microjustice considerations, it may be possible to mitigate opposition to social policies aimed at redressing societal injustice.

Appendix: Items Used in Endorsement of Macrojustice and Microjustice Principles Measure

Endorsement of Macrojustice Principles Items

1. There should be an appropriate balance kept between the number of jobs and promotions given to target-group (e.g., women and visible minorities) and non-target-group (e.g., White males) applicants.
2. The number of jobs and promotions given to target-group members (e.g., women and visible minorities) should not be too much less than the number of jobs given to non-target-group members (e.g., White males).
3. The total amount of jobs and promotions given to target-group members (e.g., women and visible minorities) and to non-target-group members (e.g., White males) should be proportionate to the number of target-group and non-target-group members in the applicant pool.
4. The income differences between social groups (e.g., visible minorities and Whites, men and women) should not be too large.
5. There should be a minimum income guaranteed for everyone.
6. Income should be based on the legitimate needs of each individual and their family.
7. The rich should be taxed so that the poor can be helped.
8. There is too much difference in income between the rich and the poor.

Endorsement of Microjustice Principles Items

1. The procedures used in organizations to determine which applicants should receive a job or promotion should be the same for everyone regardless of each applicant's circumstance.
2. The procedures used in organizations to determine which applicants should receive a job or promotion should take into consideration only applicants' job-relevant qualifications.
3. Jobs and promotions should be given to the most deserving (or meritorious) candidate.
4. Job and promotion decisions should take into account the amount of effort people put into their jobs.
5. Each person's income should be based on how hard he or she works relative to others.
6. A person's income should be based on how much he or she accomplishes on the job.
7. People should be rewarded with more income if they have more ability.

Note All items were rated on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Macrojustice items 4–8 and microjustice items 5–7 were drawn from Sinclair and Mark (1991).

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