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**THE IRONIES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION:  
EMPIRICAL ANALYSES OF UC STUDENTS'  
VIEWS ON FALLACIES AND PROBLEMS  
OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

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Hiroshi Fukurai, et al.\*

\* Co-Authors:

Darryl Davies, Post-Graduate Research Assistant  
Anne Shin, Post-Graduate Research Assistant  
Dionelle Fletcher, Senior in Sociology  
Belinda Lum, Senior in Sociology  
Khanh Ngo, Senior in Sociology  
Lauren Pieter, Senior in Sociology  
Bhavani Parsons, Senior in Sociology  
Michael Shin, Senior in Sociology  
Kara Sloman, Senior in Sociology

The 1990s may be said to have been tumultuous for affirmative action. They mark the culmination of profound disagreements over the moral and political status of affirmative action programs (Lowery, 1995; Ponders, 1995; Stanfield, 1995). In July 1995, the University of California Board of Regents voted to end affirmative action in admissions, hiring, and contracting on the basis of race and gender (Burdman, 1996). In November 1996, American citizens had an opportunity to decide whether affirmative action programs should be terminated from all federal programs. The Equal Opportunity Act introduced by Republican presidential candidate Robert Dole seeks to abolish three decades of affirmative action programs initiated by President Johnson in 1965 (Wells and Langdon, 1995; Smith, 1996).

The intense debates on affirmative action have ranged over a number of social, political, and legal issues such as practical reasoning about effective policy making (Santoro, 1995; Simon, 1995; Thurman, 1995), recognition of past racial and gender discrimination (Aubry, 1995; Moore, 1995), and endorsement of the spirit of equality based on the equal protection clause of the Constitution (Bressman, 1991;

Oellerman, 1989).[1] Surprisingly, one core controversy in the affirmative action debate is the disagreement over the social and legal definition of affirmative action—what affirmative action really involves and how affirmative action policies should be judged. Affirmative action policies have been subject to a variety of divergent interpretations. For instance, opponents of affirmative action focus on quotas and preferences (Steele, 1990; Ward, 1995). By contrast, advocates of affirmative action concentrate on outreach, recruiting, and equal opportunities.[2] As a result, a variety of myths and fallacies have emerged on the definition and judgment of the policy of affirmative action, creating even greater controversies over the proprieties of race- or gender-conscious remedies to counteract inequities in modern America (Harris and Narayan, 1994; Taylor, 1995).

The position taken in this paper seeks to expose certain inaccuracies or fallacies that permeate the opposition to affirmative action. Part I focuses on a variety of myths and misconceptions impacting affirmative action programs. This section places greater emphasis on race-conscious affirmative action programs than on gender considerations. Part II then provides an empirical analysis of University of California (UC) students' perceptions of affirmative action. Given that the UC system became the first major institution of higher education to abolish affirmative action programs based on race and gender considerations, UC students' views provide an important barometer of the relevance of gender- and color-blind policies. Finally, Part III discusses the current controversies over affirmative action and how misconceptions of affirmative action are entwined with attitudes towards the use of race- or gender-conscious remedies to rectify racial and gender discrimination.

The main thrust of this paper, then, is intended to be both explanatory and prescriptive. It is explanatory insofar as it explains why many individuals misunderstand the intent and spirit of affirmative action, and prescriptive to the extent that its arguments and findings can form the basis for future affirmative action policies. By breaking down some of the myths surrounding affirmative action, it is also hoped that it will be possible to move toward overcoming the stalemate currently characterizing the affirmative action controversies.

#### MYTHS AND FALLACIES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

A number of misconceptions surround affirmative action, and they deserve critical examination. The following section reviews each individual claim.

#### 1. Affirmative action is no longer needed because gender and race inequality is nonexistent.

Some opponents of affirmative action argue that the magnitude of today's race and gender problems no longer matches that of the past, thus negating the further implementation of affirmative action policies and programs (Kennedy, 1986; Eastland, 1992). While the argument that affirmative action is the only remedial program to rectify race and gender discrimination is still being debated, the following statistics nonetheless prove the pervasiveness of gender and race inequality in today's society. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, for example, though white males constitute 33% of the U.S. population, they also represent 88% of tenured professors, 95% of Fortune 500 chief executive officers (CEO), 85% of partners in major law firms, 97% of school superintendents, 80% of the U.S. House of Representatives, and 90% of the U.S. Senate (Mann, 1990; Anderson and Shapiro, 1996). Similarly, in terms of economic and earning disparity, for every dollar earned by white males, white women earn 71 cents, African American women 64 cents, and Hispanic women 54 cents ("Gender gap," 1992; Burstein and Edwards, 1994; Duncan, 1994; Bernhardt, Morris, and Handcock, 1995).[3]

Studies also show that 86% of all available jobs including 80% of all executive positions are not generally listed in classified ads, but are filled by informal networks including word-of-mouth and employee referrals (Ezorsky, 1991:72; Petras and Petras, 1993:73; Harris, 1994:20). As a result, women and racial minorities are less likely to obtain jobs through word of mouth and other informal recruiting and hiring practices (Jones, 1994:2361).[4] Empirical studies show that many African American job applicants are rated more negatively than white candidates even with identical credentials (McCohohay, 1986). Other studies show that the same resume with a woman's name on it receives a significantly lower rating than when it has a man's name on it, suggesting that gender-bias operates when there is no direct contact with the persons evaluated (Rhode, 1988:1207).

Similarly, according to the 1990 Census, one third of All African American and one-fourth of all Hispanic families live in poverty, compared to 9.2% of white families (Simms, 1991; Jackson, 1993; O'Hara, 1995).[5] Native Americans remain the most impoverished minority, and their communities are plagued with disproportionately high incidents of unemployment, infant mortality, alcoholism, and suicide (Young, 1991, 1993; Young and French, 1993; Watts, 1994; Van-Landingham and Hogue, 1995).[6] The overwhelming evidence of

racial and gender inequality based on available census and social science data supports the claim that women and racial minorities continue to suffer from substantial race and gender-based differentials in income and employment, and that gender and racial inequities are still pervasive in American society. While there may be other viable social legal remedies besides affirmative action, empirical data fails to support the myth of a color-blind society.

2. Affirmative action involves reverse discrimination.

The concept and ramifications of "reverse" discrimination involving affirmative action were scrutinized by the Court in Regents of University of California v. Bakke (438 U.S. 265, 1978) in which a white male litigant challenged the admissions program of the medical school at the University of California, Davis, alleging that his admission was denied because of unconstitutional racial quotas reserved specifically for minority applicants.[7] The Court ruled that government-sponsored racial quotas violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, but allowed the temporary use of numerical admission goals to rectify race and gender disparities where past discrimination had been proven and other remedies had been ineffective.[8]

While the Bakke case may be the most celebrated state affirmative action case involving reverse discrimination against white males, the total number of discrimination complaints filed by white male litigants do not reflect the pervasiveness of incidents of alleged reverse discrimination. Of 91,183 discrimination complaints filed in 1994, only 1.5% alleged that white males had been discriminated against. Similarly, one legal analyst argues that the term "reverse discrimination" is a covert political term exploited as an appeal to a particular political ideology or policy preference (Fetzer, 1993:212).

The term "reverse discrimination" also stirs racial emotions and tends to distort the magnitude and the historical significance of racial discrimination in American society. In order to truly "reverse" the situation of African Americans, white Americans would have to endure two centuries of slavery and another century of enforced segregation. The very concept, "reverse discrimination," thus denies American history, trivializes discrimination against racial minorities, and ignores critical power differentials between racial groups (Pettigrew, 1996).

3. Affirmative action is a form of reparation.

This myth exploits the reluctance of Americans to compensate for past wrongs. This myth may be closely related to historical incidents and recent political apology involving Japanese Americans and their internment experience during World War II (Korematsu v. United

States, 323 U.S. 214, 1944; Mendenhall, 1995). While it took Japanese Americans a half-century to receive an apology for their war-time internment, affirmative action is not designed as a compensatory program. Rather, it addresses current discrimination and proposes race- and gender-based remedies to counteract the discrimination of the present. The myth of reparation thus implies that affirmative action requires today's white males and others to pay for discrimination which they did not cause or from which they did not benefit. African American Professor Shelby Steele, a strong opponent of affirmative action, acknowledges that "it is impossible to repay blacks living today for historic suffering of the race. ... Suffering can be endured and overcome, it cannot be repaid" (Steele, 1994:43). The spirit of affirmative action thus looks to the present and future, not the past. Since present discrimination against minorities, especially African Americans, is a legacy of America's tragic racial history, affirmative action focuses on the current effects of this legacy, not compensation or reparation for past wrongs.

4. Affirmative action requires the use of unacceptable group quotas and preference.

"Quota" is a word that stirs deep feelings, even though it is little understood. Many of the attacks on affirmative action constitute an urgent appeal to alleviate the injustices that the majority group experiences from the quotas inherent in affirmative action programs (Barnes, 1995:865). This conception of affirmative action, however, distorts the reality of both the purpose and operation of these programs.[9] As noted previously, the Court ruled in the 1978 Bakke case that government-sponsored racial quotas are in direct confrontation with the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Court only allowed temporary, not permanent, use of numerical goals to rectify race and gender imbalances in areas where past discrimination had been proven. Even in places where evidence of discrimination exists, affirmative action policies are only permitted by the Court if they avoid using quotas. In these instances of the use of racial quotas where court action has not been initiated, employers and other administrators are forewarned that they must switch to a meritorious standard (Russell, 1995:1354). Thus, despite the popular equation of affirmative action and quotas, race-conscious mathematical goals remain a solid part of the remedial spectrum of discrimination law, creating an opportunity to do greater justice for the historically disadvantaged.

If affirmative action relies on group quotas, and its goals were similar to the discriminatory quotas once used against Jewish Americans in higher education, they would be clearly unacceptable

(Pettigrew, 1995). However, the goals of affirmative action programs today are precisely the opposite. They are floor goals, not quota ceilings as were anti-Jewish restrictions.[10] Since government affirmative action programs are aimed at curbing the preferential treatment to whites that has long denied equal opportunity to minorities, such floor goals for candidates are necessary to gauge progress and implement affirmative action extending equal opportunity to women and people of color (McMillion, 1996:93).

5. We should base affirmative action on social class, not on race or gender.

The focus on social and economic divergence within African American communities ignites a new wave of criticism on race-conscious affirmative action. National and international economic trends resulted in the fall of white middle-income families into lower income brackets, reinforcing white discontent with race-conscious affirmative action. Thus, the major consequence has been an increased demand for affirmative action policies premised not on race, but on wealth and income differentials or class. Class advocates call attention to the deprived socioeconomic status of Appalachian whites, whose plight is allegedly un-addressed by existing race-conscious policies that unfairly benefit racial minorities (see DeFunis v. Odegaard, 416 U.S. 312, 332, 1974).

Class advocates also contend that class-conscious initiatives are more equitable than race-conscious policies for several reasons. First, class-conscious remedies are deemed inherently just because their intended beneficiaries are racially indistinguishable (Delgado, 1991:1398). Class-conscious affirmative action purportedly avoids allocation of social benefits on the basis of racial group identification (Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke, 438 U.S. 265, 298, 1978). Lastly, class-conscious initiatives are viewed as "palliative for a-unfair competition of sorts that allegedly emerged when middle-income African Americans use race to garner education and employment opportunities to the detriment of middle-income whites" (Russell, 1995:1432). In sum, the advocacy for social policy initiatives premised on wealth and income differentials is a reaction to specific contemporary developments in America's race relations and to insecurities from socioeconomic upheavals and uncertainties. The advocacy is thus fueled by resentment at the loss of economic benefits to which whites have been historically and exclusively entitled.

This argument also shows that the use of racial classification is too broad, for it includes upper-status African Americans who may not need

affirmative action. Similarly, the claim holds that affirmative action is too narrow, for it fails to redress the disadvantaged socioeconomic conditions of low class African Americans as well as poor white males who do need affirmative action. However, the basic premise of this argument may not reflect an accurate description of reality in today's society. In most areas of American life, race limits opportunities even more than social class (Murgia, 1975). Further, upper-status African Americans are still victims of intense discrimination. What is a glass ceiling for highly skilled white females often remains a brick wall for highly skilled African American women or men (Feagin and Sikes, 1994).

Another arguments against class-conscious remedies come from Omi and Winant (1988; 1994) who argue that race plays a central axis of social relations, pervades social life, operates at both micro and macro levels, and permeates individual psyches and relationships well as collective identities and social structures. Since race is not considered a natural attribute, but represents identities and signification systems that are often naturalized, Omi and Winant argues that class and class-conscious policies are unnatural attributes of race that resulted in the tendency to dismiss race. Because class is an emerging construct through which race and "racialization" are perpetuated without explicit references to race and with purported denials of the significance of race, affirmative action as the site of this perpetuation needs to be considered on the basis of race, not on class or from class conscious perspectives. The retreat of race as the fulcrum in affirmative action policies thus is part of racial politics as well as socially consorted efforts to preserve the status quo, suggesting that we should base affirmative action on race, not on social class (Takagi, 1992).

6. Affirmative action denies merit.

One of the most explosive myths is that affirmative action denies merit and fosters incompetence and inefficiency. Attempts to address structural barriers to racial and gender discrimination through affirmative action programs have been repeatedly criticized as undermining the principle of a merit-based consideration, a principle that is asserted as if there is a uniformly unproblematic and categorical mandate. The myth, however, falsely assumes that there is some tangible quality loosely defined as merit "which is often referred to the bundle of ability and skills that individuals possess and upon which they can and should be allocated opportunities and rewards" (Haney and Hurtado, 1994:227). The merit advocate also contends that the standardized test can accurately assess and measure individual qualification, ability, skill, and

competence. Social science studies, however, show that standardized test scores are, at best, highly imperfect indicators of one's skill, competence, qualification, or performance. Haney and Hurtado argue that:

The very concept of "merit" and the associated notions of "ability" and "qualification" are socially constructed categories. How we define, measure, and value those concepts, as well as the specific manner in which they are applied in any given setting, are social conventions rooted in a dominant culture view of society (1994:239).

The myth of meritocracy thus masks those cultural-based contingencies and obscures the way in which the assumption of a uniformly measurable standardized test is built into the assessment of individual skill, competency, and qualification.

Additionally, there is ample evidence that test scores on standardized tests do not predict equally well for men and women. A study of three college admissions tests (the SAT, the PSAT/NMSQT, and the ACT) reveals that although women consistently earn better high school and college grades, they receive lower scores on those standardized tests.[11] Standardized test scores, however, adversely affect women's chances for admission to colleges and universities, their chances for scholarships (Teitelbaum, 1989:325), entry into "gifted" programs, and their academic self-perception (Rosser, 1987). Similarly, as a result of these unsupported beliefs, affirmative action policies that depart from strict considerations of standardized test scores are often taken to constitute the strong evidence for institutional deviation from standards of merit, and the constitutive element of the "preference" thought to be awarded to women and minority applicants.[12]

#### 7. Affirmative action heightens racial tensions and leads to racial divisions.

Another myth surrounding affirmative action is that affirmative action increases racial resentment and promotes racial divisions, thereby undermining the consensus necessary for effective reforms. One of the most controversial myths about racial divisions is that Asian Americans are harmed by affirmative action programs. Recent affirmative action controversies tend to scrutinize racial tensions between Asian Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities (Wu, 1995:225).

House Speaker Newt Gingrich, for instance, has carefully included Asian Americans in his attack against affirmative action, asserting that "Asian Americans are facing a very real danger of being discriminated

against" because they are overrepresented at prestigious universities that have affirmative action policies.[13]. The sponsors of the anti-affirmative action ballot proposal, called the California Civil Rights Initiative, refer to Asian Americans as a "cultural group" that has become overrepresented in the University of California (UC) system (Wildavsky, 1995; Wilson, 1995). According to the model minority thesis, Asian Americans have suffered discrimination but they overcome its effects by being conservative, hard-working, and well-educated, rather than through any government benefits or racial preferences, suggesting that Asian Americans, more than whites, have become the "innocent victims" of so called "reverse discrimination." California Governor Wilson's spokesman, Paul Kranhold, once told affirmative action hunger strikers that "if we had denied admission to the University of California to a more qualified Asian American in favor of somebody who belong to a preferred racial group, we call that affirmative action. But it's still racial discrimination and it's wrong" (Wilson, 1995). Thus, the media and political attention that paid to Asian Americans pits them against African Americans and other racial groups, as if one group could succeed only by the failure of the other. Moreover, Asian Americans are encouraged to view other minority groups as threats to their own upward mobility, and African Americans are led to see Asian Americans, many of whom are immigrants, as another racial group that has usurped what was meant for them (Chew, 1994).

The very fact that Asian Americans are praised as a race belies the thesis of color-blindness. Research, for instance, shows that Asian Americans and other racial groups still face racial discrimination and are almost always excluded from race-based college admissions, promotions, and employment programs (Takagi, 1992; Carroll, 1996). Research also demonstrates that affirmative action policies have historically assisted Asian and Pacific Islanders, who have been and continue to be discriminated against (Wu, 1995). Furthermore, in 1992, the admission rate of Filipino students to the UC system decreased from 32% to 18% when they were dropped from affirmative action programs (Galedo, 1994). In other words, the dilemma of Asian Americans and affirmative action should be properly understood as an issue which has been maneuvered and manufactured for political gains and that the model minority image of Asian Americans became an effective means of dissecting orchestrated minority efforts and creating racial animosity among racial minority groups themselves (Wu, 1995:226).

8. Affirmative action stigmatizes the beneficiaries.

Another myth of affirmative action is that it leads to a sense of demoralization, promoting the feeling of inferiority on the part of racial minorities. Under affirmative action, the quality that earns racial minorities "preferential treatment" is an implied inferiority (Steele, 1990). However, this inferiority is explained by a myriad of deprivations that grew out of historical oppressions. Similarly, it may be unrealistic to think that affirmative action causes most white disparagement of the abilities of racial minorities. Rather, such disparagement is precisely what engendered the explosive crisis to which affirmative action is a response. The presence of racial minorities across the broad spectrum of institutional settings upsets conventional stereotypes and acculturates the public to the idea that minorities can and must participate in all areas of our national life. This positive result of affirmative action thus may outweigh any stigma that the policy causes.

9. Affirmative action encourages minorities to exploit their own past victimization.

Similar to implied inferiority, victimization is considered as a purported justification for preference. Thus, to receive the benefits of preferential treatment, this myth assumes that one must view oneself as a victim, implying that there is more power in minorities' past suffering than in present achievements. Professor Steel argued that the "liability of affirmative action comes from the fact that it indirectly encourages blacks to exploit their own past victimization as a source of power and privilege. ... The obvious irony here is that we become inadvertently invested in the very condition we are trying to overcome" (Steel, 1990:118). However, as noted previously, affirmative action addresses current discrimination and is not a compensatory program for past wrongs

10. Affirmative action results in mediocrity.

Another myth of affirmative action is that greater racial diversities due to affirmative action lead to the decline of work or academic standards. Research, however, suggests that at leading academic institutions, the academic quality has increased as the student population has racially diversified. Of the first year students admitted to the University of California, Berkeley, 95% continue to rank among the top 12.5% of the statewide high school graduates. Similarly, while standardized test scores may not accurately measure individual competence or qualification, the mean Scholastic Aptitude Test score was 1,220 for the first year students in fall 1992, 100 points higher than a decade ago (Tien, 1994:243).

In work-related environments, research shows that diversity in the work force improves creativity, enhances performance, and improves productivity (Connell and Nazario, 1995). A recent poll also shows that 68% of CEOs found affirmative action programs, "good, very good, or outstanding," while only 2% of them rated them "poor" (Decker, 1995). Research thus rejects the myth that affirmative action leads to mediocrity. Instead, racially diversified work places and academic environments have led to the improvement of work-related performances and academic standards.

The main thrust of this paper is an attempt to exorcise the specter of rejection and ambivalence that haunts the contemporary discourse on affirmative action. By critically analyzing those ten problematic understandings and fallacies of affirmative action, and by clarifying the contexts in which affirmative action policies must be understood, the following empirical analyses hope to make a robust and unapologetic case for affirmative action policies. In the next section, survey analyses are carried out to examine general perceptions on the affirmative action myths and discuss the relationship between individuals' racial, gender, and social class backgrounds and their perceptions vis-à-vis the myths and fallacies of affirmative action policies. Since the subject of affirmative action may reflect social and political expressions of a wider, underlying conflicts by class, race, and gender, empirical analyses based on socio-demographic considerations allow us to focus on the perceptions on affirmative action programs and race- and gender-conscious remedies and structures that may reflect the struggle to dominate or emancipate, for inequality or equity. The next section then presents methodologies, measurements, and questions to examine affirmative action myths and fallacies.

## METHODOLOGIES

### SAMPLE:

In Fall, 1995, a group of first year students at the University of California, Santa Cruz were contacted to provide their responses to various questions involving the myths and fallacies of affirmative action. The intent of the student survey was to understand the students' knowledge on the current controversy and the debate surrounding the issue of affirmative action, their comprehension of the history of affirmative action, and their views on the present and future status of af-

firmative action and race- and gender-conscious remedies in rectifying racial and gender discrimination.

The sample of first year students came from introductory sociology courses and freshmen core college programs. The decision to examine the first year students in introductory college courses is based on the following two considerations. First, introductory courses are part of general education requirements that must be taken by all incoming first year students, thus providing more or less representative samples of first year cohorts. Similarly because of the required general education courses, survey findings provide greater generalizability on the basis of students' majors and specializations.[14]

Besides the introductory sociology courses, students in core college programs are also contacted in order to over-sample racial minority students. Core college programs, unique to UCSC curriculum requirements, are mandatory courses for all incoming freshmen in all nine colleges at UCSC. Since UCSC currently has one of the lowest enrollment of racial and ethnic minority students among the nine UC campuses, first year students enrolled in core programs at the minority dominant Oaks College are contacted in order to over-sample minority students.[15]

The survey differed from at least some other studies in the degree to which it attempted to employ more elaborate questions concerning myths and fallacies of affirmative action as well as to solicit responses on potential beneficiaries and losers of affirmative action and their effects on respondents' perceptions on the fairness and viability of affirmative action programs. Thus, within the limitations imposed by survey research methodology, we sought to have our respondents answer many of the race- and gender-related sensitive questions in the general social context. A total of 266 respondents were contacted and their responses were carefully coded, computerized, and analyzed.

#### Measurements:

Each of affirmative action's myths and problems is measured by the questions listed below.

1. Affirmative action is no longer needed because gender and race inequality is non-existent today.

This myth stems from the continued denial of gender and racial discrimination in our society. Thus it is measured by the following question, "discrimination against women and racial minorities is a very serious problem."

2. Affirmative action represents reverse discrimination.

Two measures are employed to examine the myth of affirmative action that represents reverse discrimination: (1) "affirmative action is another form of discrimination," and (2) "affirmative action programs for minorities reduce whites' opportunities in hiring and school admissions."

3. Affirmative action is a form of reparation.

Two measurements examine this myth of affirmative action: (1) "affirmative action is a form of reparation," and (2) "affirmative action helps overcome past discrimination."

4. Affirmative action requires the use of unacceptable group quotas and preference.

Two questions are designed to measure the myth surrounding the use of quotas in affirmative action in relation to the implication of "preferential treatment": (1) "quotas are the same as preferential treatment," and (2) "quotas imply the allocation of opportunities and rewards to persons simply because of their race or gender."

5. We should base affirmative action on social class, not on race.

The question, "preferential treatments based on socioeconomic factors are more fair than those based on race or gender," examines this myth of affirmative action based on social class, not on race.

6. Affirmative action denies merit.

Three questions are employed to examine this myth: (1) "determining college admission should be based solely on merit," (2) "standardized tests are valid measurements of one's qualification and competence," and (3) "standardized tests are useful in determining hiring and college admissions."

7. Affirmative action heightens racial tension and leads to racial divisions.

The question, "affirmative action increases racial resentments and creates racial division," measures individual perceptions on the relationship between affirmative action and racial hostility and tensions.

8. Affirmative action stigmatizes minorities.

Three questions examine the myth of stigmatization: (1) "affirmative action stigmatizes minorities, implying that they simply cannot compete on an equal basis," (2) "affirmative action programs promote the feeling of superiority among racial majority," and (3) "it is immoral for a person to accept a job based solely on race and/or gender." While the first two questions examine the perceived stigma involving racial groups' superior and/or inferior status, the last question measures the perception of affirmative action's myth of "racial and

gender preference" and the morality of accepting jobs based solely on their "preferential treatment."

9. Affirmative action encourages minorities to exploit their own past victimization.

Two questions are used to examine this myth: (1) "affirmative action indirectly encourages minorities to exploit their own discrimination," and (2) "if whites had been historically discriminated against, they should be given preferential treatments." The second question also examines the perception on the concept of historic reparation that grows out of needs to impose on society a degree of justice that may not exist.

10. Affirmative action results in mediocrity.

Two questions, "racial diversity at UC campuses has led to the decline of the academic quality" and "affirmative action provides opportunities to less qualified or less competent individuals" measure the perception on the relationship between racial diversities and competency of racial minorities in both work-related environments and academic institutions. Another question, "racially diverse work places are better than single-race work places," is also designed to measure whether diversity is equated to the notion of improved productivity, enhanced performance, and improved creativity as part of racially integrated working environment and work-related benefits. Lastly, the question, "affirmative action benefits society as a whole," measures the perception of whether the beneficial aspect of affirmative action is considered as societal goals.

Those questions and measurements are then reported by race, gender, and social class backgrounds of survey respondents. Because affirmative action programs are closely intertwined with the issue of both race and gender, the breakdown of analytical findings by race and gender provide greater insights into the perception of various myths and fallacies of affirmative action programs. Similarly, respondents' social class backgrounds also impact individual perceptions on affirmative action, provided that a socioeconomic factor is also one of key affirmative action criteria under scrutiny.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows the empirical result of the findings. The first column shows the questions that measure myths and fallacies of affirmative action. The second column in the table shows the overall percentage of respondents who answered yes to the questions. The third through sixth columns show the responses based on respondents' racial

backgrounds. The seventh and eight columns show the gender breakdowns, and the last four columns in the table show the responses on the basis of parents' annual income, a proxy to represent respondents' social class background.

The analysis shows that while 78.2% of respondents favor affirmative action in education, support for affirmative action in hiring and contracting is somewhat lower than that in education (73.7% and 63.2%, respectively). However, the survey discloses that when respondents' race is introduced, white respondents show the lowest support for affirmative action in all three areas (73.1%, 65.5%, and 54.4%), although African Americans show the highest support in all three fields (100.0%, 92.8%, and 92.8%). With respect to gender breakdowns, while the figures are very similar, females (74.4% and 65.4%) are more likely to support affirmative action in hiring and contracting than males (72.6% and 58.9%). The lowest support in affirmative action comes from those respondents whose parents annual income exceed \$100,000 (69.6% for both college admission and hiring). Particularly, only half of the respondents (51.5%) with parents earning \$100,000 or more support affirmative action in business contracting.

1. Affirmative action is no longer needed because race and gender inequality is non-existent today.

In response to the question that discrimination against women and racial minorities is a very serious problem, almost all of respondents (94.7%) agree with the statement. There are no considerable variations by race or gender, except by respondents' parental income, in which those with the lowest parental earnings (82.6%) are least likely to share the view that racial and gender discrimination is still serious social problems in our society.

2. Affirmative action represents reverse discrimination.

Respondent are asked whether affirmative action programs reduce whites' opportunities in hiring and school admissions. Overall, 37.8% say that affirmative action for minorities limit whites' chance in employment and education. Whites (48.4%) and Asians (40.9%) are much more likely than African Americans (8.3%) and Hispanics (18.9%) to agree with the so called discriminatory effects of affirmative action. There are also differences in support of this view based on parental income, with those earning \$100,000 or more (44.8%) being more likely to feel the discriminatory effects of affirmative action than either those less than \$15,000 (36.3%), \$15,000-49,999 (37.3%), or \$50,000-99,999 (36.0%). The gender differences are not significant, by a margin of 37.2% for males to 38.1% for females.



When asked whether affirmative action is another form of discrimination, whites (36.3%) and Asians (38.1%) agree with the statement, while African Americans (0.0%) and Hispanics (8.1%) do not share the same opinion. There are differences in support of the discriminatory effects of affirmative action based on gender, with males (33.1%) being more likely to agree with the statement than female respondents (26.1%). In terms of parental earnings, those with lowest (34.7%) and highest parental incomes (34.4%) show similar response, while middle income groups (24.7% and 28.7% for those with \$15,000-49,999 and \$50,000-99,999, respectively) show less agreement with the discriminatory effects of affirmative action.

### 3. Affirmative action is a form of reparation.

Respondents are queried on the issue of affirmative action as a form of reparation. Overall, 80.1% agree that affirmative action is a form of reparation, with considerable variations on the basis of race and parental earnings. For instance, whites (81.8%) and Asians (83.3%) are more likely than African Americans (55.5%) or Hispanics (70.3%) to agree with the statement. Similarly, two middle income groups (80.8% and 87.7%) are more likely than those less than \$15,000 (64.2%) or those more than \$100,000 (65.0%) to feel that affirmative action is a form of reparation. More females (82.2%) are also in agreement with the statement than males (76.9%).

For the question of whether affirmative action helps overcome past discrimination, overall, 71.1% of respondents agree with the statement. Whites (71.5%) and Asians (90.9%) are much more likely than African Americans (50.0%) and Hispanics (67.5%) to view affirmative action programs to help overcome past discrimination. Males (73.5%) are also more likely to agree with the question than females (69.7%). There are also differences based on parental earnings, with two highest income groups (75.0% and 72.4% for \$50,000-99,999 and \$100,000 or more, respectively) being more likely to agree with the statement than those whose parents earn less than \$15,000 (61.9%) and \$15,000-49,999 (69.2%).

### 4. Affirmative action requires the use of unacceptable group quotas and preference.

Overall, 56.0% of respondents feel that quotas imply the allocation of opportunities and rewards to persons simply because of their race or gender. There are also differences by race and parental incomes. Whites (62.3%) are most likely to agree with the statement, while African Americans (23.0%) are least likely to agree with the question. Respondents with parental earnings of \$50,000-99,999 (68.9%) are most

likely to agree with the statement, and those with \$15,000-49,999 (46.6%) show the least agreement with the question.

In response to the question that quotas are the same as preferential treatment, 32.1% of overall respondents equate quotas to preferential treatment. Whites (42.3%) are more likely to agree with the statement than African Americans (15.3%), Hispanics (22.2%), or Asians (35.7%). There are also considerable variations by parental incomes, with the lowest (53.3%) and highest income brackets (40.4%) being more likely to equate quotas to preferential treatments than two middle income groups (25.8% and 33.3%, respectively).

### 5. We should base affirmative action on social class, not on race.

The survey examined student responses regarding whether preferential treatments based on economic factors are more equitable and fair than those based on race or gender. Overall, 60.8% of respondents opt for a policy that empathize social-economic considerations rather than race or gender. There are also greater variations of responses by race and gender than parental earnings. Whites (64.2%) are more likely to prefer the policy that emphasize social class and economic factors than African Americans (45.4%), Hispanics (58.0%), or Asians (60.0%). Males (65.3%) are more likely to favor the use of the social class criterion than females (58.1%). With respect to parental incomes, those with the highest income bracket (63.3%) are more likely to favor the use of social class than other lower income respondents (60.0%, 58.1%, and 59.3% for the three income groups, respectively).

### 6. Affirmative action denies merit.

The respondents were asked whether determining college admission should be based solely on merit. Overall, 37.9% of respondents agreed with the statement. Whites (40.7%) are more likely to prefer the policy based on merit than African Americans (7.6%), Hispanics (25.7%), or Asians (27.2%). Female respondents (40.1%) are also more likely to prefer the meritorious consideration in college admission than males (34.0%). Respondent with lowest parental earnings (45.0%) are more likely to agree with the statement than the other three income groups (35.8%, 43.0%, and 33.3%, in an ascending order of parental incomes, respectively).

In response to the question that standardized tests are valid measures of one's qualification and competence, only 9.0% of the respondents agree with the statement. There are greater variations by race and gender, however. Asians (41.6%) are more likely to agree with the validity of standardized tests as measurements of one's competence and qualification than whites (6.6%), African Americans (0.0%), or His-

panics (5.2%). Males (11.9%) are more likely to agree with merit and validity of standardized tests than females (7.4%).

The survey also examined student opinions on whether affirmative action provides opportunities to less qualified or less competent individuals. Overall 44.7% agree with the statement, with Asians (56.5%) being more likely to feel negative implications of opportunity allocations of affirmative action than other racial groups, including whites (48.0%), African Americans (25.0%), or Hispanics (27.0%). Males (26.2%) are slightly more likely than females (42.8%) to agree with the statement. Those with the lowest parental earnings (56.5%) are more likely to agree with the statement than other higher income groups (41.1%, 50.0%, and 45.1% for parental earnings in an ascending order, respectively).

#### 7. Affirmative action leads to racial divisions.

Student respondents are asked whether affirmative action increases racial resentments and creates racial division. Almost half (51.0%) of respondents feel that increased racial divisions and resentments are caused by affirmative action. There are considerable variations on this question by race and gender. The majority of both whites (55.1%) and Asians (50.0) are more likely to agree with the statement than African Americans (15.3%) or Hispanics (42.8%). Male respondents (55.1%) are more likely to feel that increased racial divisions and resentment are caused by affirmative action than females (48.3%).

#### 8. Affirmative action stigmatizes minorities.

Respondents are asked whether affirmative action stigmatizes minorities, implying that they simply cannot compete on an equal basis. Overall 44.2% of respondents agree with the demoralizing effects of affirmative action. There are also differences by race, gender, and social class. For example, while Asians (54.1%) are more likely to feel the negative stigmatizing effect of affirmative action than other racial groups, both whites (46.7%) and African Americans (46.1%) show the similar views on the demoralizing effect. Hispanics (27.7%) are the least likely to believe in the negative demoralizing effects of affirmative action. Similarly exactly half of male respondents (50.0%) agree with the statement, while 40.4% of female respondents agree with the negative effect of affirmative action. With respect to parental incomes, those with the lowest (38.1%) and highest income earnings (32.1%) are less likely to agree with the negative effect of affirmative action than other middle income groups (50.5% and 42.4%, respectively).

In response to the question that affirmative action programs promote the feeling of superiority among racial majority, 22.3% of respon-

dents agree with the statement. Similar to the previous question, whites (22.7%) and Asians (21.0%) are more likely to share that affirmative action leads to whites' superiority than African Americans (9.0%) or Hispanics (15.1%). Males (28.3%) are more likely to agree with the superiority of whites than females (18.6%). Respondents with the highest parental earnings (19.2%) are less likely to agree with the superior view of white race caused by affirmative action than other income groups (25.0%, 23.6%, and 23.4%, respectively in an ascending order).

Respondents are also asked whether it is immoral for a person to accept a job based solely on race and/or gender. Nearly half (49.5%) of respondents agree with the immorality of accepting jobs based solely on race or gender considerations. Whites (55.0%) are more likely to share the immoral view than African Americans (33.3%), Hispanics (39.3%), or Asians (45.4%). With respect to gender, females (54.7%) are more likely to agree with the statement than males (41.4%). The majority of two middle income groups (50.0% and 52.2%) are more likely to share the immoral view on accepting jobs based solely on racial and gender criteria than the lowest (36.8%) or the highest income group (46.4%).

#### 9. Affirmative action encourages minorities to exploit their own past victimization.

Respondents are asked whether affirmative action indirectly encourages minorities to exploit their own discrimination. Nearly a third (32.5) of respondents agreed with the statement. There are also considerable variations by race, gender, and parental earnings of individual respondents. Whites (37.7%) and Asians (35.2%) are more likely to share the view of exploitation by minorities than African Americans (16.6%) or Hispanics (15.6%). Males (41.1%) are more likely to agree with the statement than females (27.9%). Respondents with the lowest (38.8%) and highest income earnings (38.4%) are more likely than middle income groups (29.6% and 31.8%) to agree with the exploitation of affirmative action by minorities.

In response to the question that, if whites had been historically discriminated against, they should be given preferential treatment, 70.7% of respondents agree with the application of preference for whites. Interestingly, whites (67.5%) show the lowest support for "preferential" affirmative action applications for whites as a racial group. Other racial groups show higher supports of applying a preferential treatment for whites (72.7%, 74.1%, and 76.1% for African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians, respectively). Females (69.4%) and those in the lowest

income earning group (62.6%) are less likely to support the application of affirmative action for whites if they had been targets of racial discrimination than males (72.0%) or higher income respondents (76.5%, 69.5%, and 69.5%, respectively).

#### 10. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RESULTS IN MEDIOCRITY

The survey asked whether racial diversity at UC campuses has led to the decline of academic quality. Only 3.7% of the overall respondents believe the negative impact of racial diversity on academic standards at UC campuses. None of African American or Asian respondents feel the decline of academic qualities at UC campuses as results of racial diversity. The only exception is that respondents from the highest income earning bracket (11.1%) are more likely to feel that racial diversity leads to the decline of the academic quality than all other income groups.

Respondents are also asked whether racially diverse work places are better than single-race work places. Similar to the previous question, almost all respondents (96.3%) share the view that racially integrated work places are better than racially segregated work environments. While there are no considerable variations by race or gender, those with the lowest parental earnings (85.7%) are the least likely to agree with the beneficial aspects of racially integrated work place.

In response to the question, "affirmative action benefits society as a whole," 80.0% of respondents agreed with the statement. Asians (56.5%) are less likely to feel the societal benefit of affirmative action than whites (84.0%), African Americans (78.5%), or Hispanics (80.5%). Males (82.5%) are also more likely to agree with affirmative action's societal benefits than females (78.2%). There are also considerable differences by parental earnings. Those with parents earning less than \$15,000 (59.0%) are less likely to agree with the societal benefit of affirmative action than respondents in higher income groups (86.8%, 78.2%, and 78.5%, respectively in an ascending order of parental incomes).

#### DISCUSSIONS

Survey findings show considerable variations on respondents' perceptions on myths, fallacies, and problems of affirmative action, particularly by race and parental earnings, and somewhat less variations based on gender. The overwhelming majority of respondents support affirmative action in admission, hiring, and contracting, a finding that is

contrary to the UC Regents' decision last year to ban affirmative action in those three areas based on race and gender. The only exception is that, while the majority of all racial groups support affirmative action in three areas, both whites and those with the highest parental earnings are least likely to show support for affirmative action policies.

While almost all of respondents agree on the pervasiveness of today's racial and gender discrimination in our society, both white and Asian respondents tend to feel that affirmative action represents reverse discrimination. The myth of affirmative action as a form of reparation is strongly held by almost all respondents (80.1%), except African American respondents (55.5%). White respondents hold the most negative views on the use of quotas and preferential treatments than other racial groups. Similarly, the majority of all racial groups, except African Americans, support the fairness of the policy that emphasizes socioeconomic considerations other than race or gender.

Perhaps the most significant race and social class variations are found on the myth involving merit and the usefulness of the universalistic standardized measurement of excellence and achievement. Asian respondents overwhelmingly support both the validity and usefulness of standardized tests to evaluate one's qualification and competence and thus allocations of opportunities and rewards in both education and employment. This finding supports the general view of Asians as a model minority and their reliance and support for the educational and meritocratic avenues for their social and economic drives towards upward social mobility. For instance, an Asian female student responded to an open-ended question on affirmative action, arguing:

I am against affirmative action because Asians suffer from it. Many Asians who are qualified to go to UC campus or medical schools are rejected over a black person who is not as qualified. But since he's African American, they choose him instead of an Asian to make a diverse campus. I feel that if one's qualified, that person should not be rejected from UC campuses, job, employment, etc.

Another Asian male student noted, "If anyone want[s] something bad enough, there is always a way. Being that I am Asian, I feel that it hurts my chances of getting accepted to a University."

In *The Bell Curve*, Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray argue that the cognitive attributes of the American population may be placed along a racial hierarchy of intelligence quotient scores, Asian Americans rank ahead of whites who rank ahead of African Americans. While the linkage of affirmative action and Asian Americans as a model

minority is considered a political maneuver crafted by conservative and neo-conservative politicians to provide a response to charges of racism (Takagi, 1992), our analyses suggest that Asian Americans tend to see themselves as victims of race-conscious remedies of affirmative action. Our findings also reveal that the majority of Asian Americans perceive affirmative action programs as the source of increasing racial tensions. In their view, such programs perpetuate the stigma of minorities being of inferior intellect and competence and unable to compete on an equal basis. Similarly, Asian Americans agree the least with the societal benefits of affirmative action.

Thus the findings suggest that Asians tend to hold the most negative view on affirmative action among racial groups, perhaps even more so than white respondents. While the large percentage of Asians still support affirmative action, their approval of affirmative action in all three areas of education, employment, and business, is lower than that of African Americans or Hispanics. The findings also show that Asians are becoming increasingly sensitive to the negative inference of affirmative action programs because the stigma of perceived inferiority and incompetence caused by affirmative action may oppose the meritocratic principles based on one's qualification and competence.

Empirical findings support the view that Asian Americans continue to play an important and pivotal role in the discussion of affirmative action, race relations, and diversity. Takagi noted:

Although Asian Americans may have been active participants in racial politics, Asian Americans' experiences are for the most part not defined by racial politics. ... In a sense, Asian Americans have functioned as a wild card in the racial politics of higher education—their educational experiences could be and have been incorporated into arguments both for and against discrimination, diversity, and affirmative action. ... [w]hat started out as an almost exclusive concern of Asian Americans [in admissions controversies] evolved into an issue that held profound consequences for other underrepresented minorities.

Our empirical findings suggest that Asians continue to function as important and significant participants in discussions involving racial diversity, racial politics, and meritocratic principles for allocating rewards and opportunities. One concern raised from the analysis, however, is that Asians are more likely to hold and believe in the myths and fallacies of affirmative action than other minority groups. While Asians are most likely to believe that affirmative action helps overcome past discrimination, they are also most likely to believe that affirmative action

fosters the feeling of inferiority because of affirmative action's perceived denial of meritocracy. The denial of meritocratic principles may be one of the reasons that Asians are more likely than other racial minorities to support the shift of affirmative action criteria from race and gender to socioeconomic factors. The retreat from race as the fulcrum in affirmative action policies thus is more evident for both Asians and whites. Further, the retreat from race is more evident among Asian Americans who are shifting their support from race- and gender-based affirmative action to class-based affirmative action, suggesting that class preferences may drop the stigma of racial preference while still benefiting racial minorities including themselves.

Research also reveals methodological flaws in the model minority thesis. While most research compared aggregate Asian American groups and aggregate white populations, one study of a northeastern university compared Asian American students and white students matched by gender, comparable scores on college entrance exams, and socioeconomic backgrounds as indicated by their parents' educational backgrounds (Toupin and Son, 1991). Contrary to the model minority image, Asian American students had lower grade point averages, were more likely to be on academic probation, were more likely to withdraw for medical reasons, and were less likely to graduate than their white counterparts. Similarly, those Asian American students more likely experience pressures that manifest themselves in various ways, including low self-esteem, poor academic performance, and a higher rate of suicide attempts (Asamen and Berry, 1987; Sue and Sue, 1987; Kato, 1989; Abe and Zane, 1990). Similarly, it is important to acknowledge that Asian Americans are a diverse population. The Census Bureau definition of Asian American includes individuals from over sixteen countries of origin or ethnic groups and over twenty Pacific Island cultures.[16] Many individuals who emigrated from Southeast Asian nations live in dismal economic and social conditions. For instance, Asian Americans of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian origins have incomes that are only a fraction of the average American, ranging from \$1,600 to \$3,200 a year, while the annual per capita income of the average American is \$7,400. A significant proportion of Asian Americans live below the poverty level, ranging from 35% of Vietnamese Americans to 67% of Laotian Americans. Those groups have much higher unemployment rates than the national average.[17] Further, for many Asian groups including those of Chinese, Pakistani, Korean, Thai, and Indonesian origins, the percentage of individuals

living below the poverty level exceeds the percentage in the general U.S. population (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1990:23).

While almost half of all Asian born immigrants have four or more years of college and arrive in the U.S. possessing extensive professional skills, the poverty and social hardships of those groups are still persistent and pervasive (Crispell, 1993). Thus, societal beliefs that Asian Americans are the model minority and are well-represented throughout most professions and industries may be precarious distortion of reality. The impact of these paradoxes on Asian Americans have been divergent, however. For some, positive public images confirm individual efforts and achievements. For others, societal expectations exert numerous pressures and create a sense of marginality, resulting in their own demoralization and fueling their animosity toward other minority members. Our findings support that Asian Americans tend to internalize the myth of the model minority and view other racial minorities competing against the interests of Asian Americans, explaining in part why Asian Americans are more likely to support class-based affirmative action policies than other racial minorities.

Advocates of class-conscious affirmative action argue that class-based remedies are justified because class as a criterion: (1) is more in line with the original intent of affirmative action; (2) disproportionately benefits minorities; (3) minimizes the stigma effect presently associated with race-based affirmative action; and (4) establishes a national consensus on race and poverty issues, leading to increased public spending on domestic social programs to help the poor and working class (Morton, 1993:1118). The legislative history of affirmative action, however, reveals that affirmative action was never designed to combat indigence. For instance, President John F. Kennedy's 1961 Executive Order 10,925 specifically provides that government contractors had to "take affirmative action to ensure that applicants ... and ... employees ... are treated ... without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin"[18] Similarly, President Johnson's 1965 Executive Order 11,246 explicitly requires that the contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed and employees treated equally during employment without regard to their protected status.[19] Thus, as far as the legislative history of affirmative action, there is no basis for class-conscious affirmative action, showing that the idea of class-based affirmative action may represent a shift in philosophy departing from the original intent of such programs.

Similarly, proponents of class-based affirmative action argue that a shift in emphasis from race to class would assist those with the greatest needs and would still disproportionately benefit minorities.[20] Research, however, shows that shifting the emphasis of affirmative action from race to class will not benefit the poor minority or poor non-minority. For instance, at least in college admission, class-based affirmative action still fails to recruit a large number of African American students from middle and upper class because of lower standardized test scores compared with those of white and Asian counterparts (Takagi, 1992:197-201). Similarly, one legal analyst declares that "the demise of affirmative action [race- or class-based] in college admission would not help the most disadvantaged white people, because they, like the most disadvantaged black people, are also not in a position to take advantage of higher education ... [w]hen the Supreme Court imposed limits on preferential admission programs, 'the real winners [were] the country's economically and educationally privileged' (Carter, 1991:80).

The major myth about class-based affirmative action is that such policies are considered beneficial for minority self-esteem because they lack the stigma of conflict associated with racial "quotas" or "preferences." As Shelby Steele claims, "One of the most troubling effects of racial preferences for blacks is a kind of demoralization, or put another way, an enlargement of self-doubt" (1990:16). Steele and other opponents of race-based affirmative action argue that the programs hurt the very people they intend to help because the process stigmatizes its beneficiaries. However, it is not apparent how a shift to class-based affirmative action will solve this problem because just as beneficiaries of race-based programs may feel stigmatized, so will beneficiaries of class-based programs. Similarly, stigma may be a very low cost when compared to the benefits received through the opportunities provided by such programs, especially in comparing to the costs associated with slavery and Jim Crow laws, such as lynching, whips, rape, and forced separation of families.

It is also extremely unlikely that the shift from race to class-based affirmative action creates a national consensus on race and class issues, leading to increased funding of class-based programs. Several already existing class-based government social programs such as Job Corps, Head Start, and Upward Bound, have been criticized by opponents of race-based affirmative action, arguing that those programs tend to disproportionately assist African Americans (Norris, 1990). However, historically, those programs have been underfunded, suggesting that a shift in the emphasis of affirmative action from race to class would not

necessarily lead to increased spending on class-based programs and initiatives (Norris, 1990; Del Valle, 1995). Our survey also shows that 60.8% of individual respondents favor class-based affirmative action. At the same time, 80.8% of them suggest that a large number of minority populations are still left untouched by affirmative action (see Table 2), and that a shift from race to class may be seen as an effective method of reaching a large proportion of untouched segments in minority populations. One white female survey participant endorses the importance of class-based affirmative action, arguing,

I just see my Chicano, Latino, and African friends getting all this [financial] aid and taking advantage of this while I get threatened to get kicked out of the dorm. I'd like to see affirmative action benefiting the economically challenged more than just by race. If affirmative action continues, I would like to see kids from the inner city benefiting and also those in the inner city that feel like they don't have a future.

While class-based affirmative action also receives endorsement from conservative politicians and opponents of race-based affirmative action, the idea of shifting the emphasis of affirmative action from race to class may be another example of the retreat from race and race-conscious remedies in redressing past and present discrimination.

Given intense debates on affirmative action and race-conscious remedies to counteract inequality in modern America, one white female student may have best summarized affirmative action controversies as follows:

I am for affirmative action because I want to live in a society where every culture is valued, respected, and loved for who we all are inside—beautiful, radiant, and divine. Separation based on race is the biggest illusion that the dominant culture has brainwashed us with—we must fight it, not with guns, but with our hearts, not with hate but with love. We are all the same, we must only awake to it. Then and only then will there be peace. Then, and only then, will all races be free.

## CONCLUSIONS

The effort to undermine or to salvage affirmative action based on race and gender will become the major civil liberties battle throughout the rest of this century. Advocates of affirmative action may admit that its cost can be high because of resentment from those who do not qualify for group preferences. However, they claim that the alternative is far worse—a system that allows the inequities of the past to continue into the present. Without affirmative action, color- and/or gender blind social policies would place too much reliance on the good-will of institutions in which racial minorities and women are still underrepresented. Proponents of affirmative action also argue that America is better off as a nation when leadership in schools, businesses, and institutions reflects the diverse population.

Affirmative action opponents, on the other hand, argue that affirmative action was inspired by conditions in the South and intended to provide relief to those who directly experienced discrimination, and that the need for affirmative action remedies has already disappeared. Since the best and fairest remedy for discrimination has been replaced by a demand for equality of results, affirmative action has brought benefits to those who have no right to claim them. And the beneficiaries of affirmative action have a stake in clinging to their "victimhood." As long as they retain their victim status, they guarantee themselves a measure of public sympathy and preferences in every area of American life in which they are underrepresented.

Regardless of the political stance and opinions on the issue of affirmative action, racial politics, and diversity, the present research finds that the myths and fallacies of affirmative action are still strongly held by individual respondents. Moreover, their views on affirmative action are not clearly distinguishable or differentiated along the conventional lines of "whites" and "blacks," "whites" and "others," or even among cohesive units of racial minorities themselves. Empirical findings suggest more complex views and beliefs on the myths and problems of affirmative action. Much research is needed, however, to examine the extent to which the analytical findings reported here can be generalized among other individual students on UC campuses or the general population.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the Student Affirmative Action/Educational Opportunity Programs (SAA/EOP) at the University of California,

Santa Cruz and Dana Takagi, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz for their continuing support and encouragement. We also thank Professors Dane Archer and Thomas Pettigrew for their comments and suggestions on our affirmative action questionnaire. Correspondence regarding this paper should be addressed to: Hiroshi Fukurai, Stevenson College, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064 or email: [hiroshi@cats.ucsc.edu](mailto:hiroshi@cats.ucsc.edu), or WWW: <http://socscisvr-01/Hiroshi/>.

## NOTES

1. Moore (1995) shows that a 1995 Gallup poll survey revealed that affirmative action for women has the support of 50% and the disapproval of 45% of Americans while affirmative action for minorities has 40% approval and 56% disapproval. Approximately 86% of Americans believe that affirmative action was necessary at the time of introduction 30 years ago. There is more support at present for affirmative action for women than for people of color.
2. See, for instance, ACLU's "Briefing paper on Affirmative action," as posted on ACLU's home page in the world wide web internet (<http://www.aclu.org/issues/racial/hmre.html>) and relevant materials shown in the home page.
3. Since 1979, approximately 59% of all corporate executives are still white males (Mann, 1990). Research also shows that African and Hispanic applicants had an approximately 50% greater chance of being turned down than a white applicant with similar financial, employment, and neighborhood characteristics in mortgage lending decisions (Glennon and Stengel, 1994).
4. Similarly, many Hispanic and Asian workers still face employment discrimination because they look and sound "foreign" (Federal General Accounting Office Report). Recently passed, stricter immigration legislation has also intensified discrimination by employers who often refuse to hire Hispanics or Asian Americans, presuming that they are illegal aliens.
5. O'Hara (1995) suggests that the 1990 Census revealed that poverty rate among ethnic minority children are higher than non-Hispanic white children, but in the ethnic groups themselves, some are relatively poorer than others. African American, Hispanic, and Native American children have a higher poverty rate than Asians. Poverty rate is also higher among immigrant children born outside the U.S. than those born in the U.S.
6. Research also shows that African American elderly people are much more likely to be poor than white elderly groups. With a new

economic measure that has been developed to address racial disparity, research shows that African American elderly people are 4.5 times more likely to be poor than white counterparts and the median total assets for African American couples was \$12, 121 points compared with \$84, 760 points for whites (Henderson, 1993).

7. Justice Harry A. Blackmun, for instance, stated in the concurring opinion, "In order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. ... We cannot—we dare not—let the Equal protection Clause [perpetuate] racial supremacy."

8. The Court's past decisions have established two standards of review for Fourteenth Amendment cases on affirmative action. The programs based on suspect classifications will be subject to strict scrutiny if employed by a state actor and intermediate scrutiny if employed by a federal actor, i.e., a congressionally mandated use of racial classifications. The suspect is said to be suspect when "it denies an individual opportunities or benefits enjoyed by others solely because of his race or ethnic background" (*Regents of University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265 305, 1978 (Powell, J.)). The two pronged test of strict scrutiny under the Equal Protection Clause requires that the state must show that its classification: (1) serves a compelling state interest; and (2) is the most narrowly tailored means to achieve that interest. Under the intermediate scrutiny test, first, the government must show that the classification scheme serves some important government objective and fall within the legislative power of Congress—this prong is referred to as the objective/interest prong. Second, the government must show that the differential treatment is substantially related to the achievement of the important government objective—this prong is referred to as the "means" prong.

9. For instance, the term, a quota, is frequently used in other fields such as immigration laws, international trades, and criminal jury trials involving racially mixed juries (Fukurai, 1995). A recent study show that when the implication of racial quotas in affirmative action is compared with international trade quotas in commodity exchanges and immigration quotas, only 12.0% and 25.2% of survey respondents expressed racial quotas in affirmative action are as restrictive as quotas in international commodity trades and immigration (Fukurai, 1995). Similarly when compared to applications of racial quotas in criminal trials in an effort to ensure racially mixed juries, only 13.3% of survey participants agreed that racial quotas in jury selection are discriminatory (Fukurai, 1996). Thus, the term, a quota or racial quota by itself, may not generate negative inference in other fields and contexts, possi-

bly suggesting that the notion of "preferences" used interchangeably with quotas in affirmative action debates may be partially responsible for negative responses to affirmative action programs. Or the term, affirmative action by itself, may generate negative connotations when used interchangeably with racial and/or gender issues.

10. Floor levels for minorities impose no ceilings on white males unless there is a fixed and finite number of positions—not the case in most situations.

11. In college admissions, for instance, research suggests that the merit is not as simple as Grade Point averages (GPA), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), or Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores. SAT and GRE scores, for instance, are found to be unrelated to success in college, failing to measure the talent or potential of individual students (Clement, Linda- U. of Maryland admissions director).

12. When some candidates have to overcome several educational and social obstacles that others do not, similarity of test scores or credentials may well amount to a significant difference in talent and potential. Even treating near identical measurement scores or credentials as signs of identical capabilities and efforts can also undermine the significance of tremendous efforts on the part of minorities in equating themselves with the majority.

13. Congressional press conference (CNN television broadcast, February 22, 1995) (transcript at 873—on file in an internet).

14. Since the Fall quarter was the first college experience for most incoming students, their views and opinions on affirmative action also are more likely to reflect the perceptions and attitudes that are more likely to be influenced by family backgrounds as well as the general public than the students who have already been enrolled at college. Transfer students from junior colleges or re-entry students are not included in the sample because they are more likely than true freshmen to have completed the general requirements before being admitted to the university, and thus not required to take the general education courses

15. The profiles of the first year students are similar to those of the sample: 63.3% of the first year students were female (1,154 out of 1,823 total first year students), while the almost identical figure of 63.8% are female in the sample (168 out of 266 students). Similarly, the measures of the central tendency—mode, median, and mean age in the sample—were 18, 19 and 19.4, respectively, similar to those in the population of the first year students (18, 18, and 18.2 for mode, median, and mean, respectively). One of the reasons that median and average figures in the sample are almost one year older than those reported by

the UCSC Office of Planning and Budget is that students' age in the survey is computed by students' birth year, while official reports are based on information reported by students applicants in their admission application forms. Similarly, our survey was conducted in December, the year's end, thus possibly increasing students' age by almost one year. The average age was also skewed because of a few outliers, i.e., a small number of older students in the sample (skewness=3.905 and kurtosis=25.114), distorting and skewing the distribution to right, i.e., towards the older age distribution. With respect to racial profiles, white respondents constitute 58% in the sample as opposed to 67.2% in the pool of the 1995 first year students. The racial minority students are thus over-sampled to make the racial comparisons meaningful.

The UCSC official reports provide the following racial breakdown of UCSC first year students: 67.2% Euro-Americans, 3.6% African Americans, 11.2% Asians, 0.2% Native Americans, 8.4% Chicano, 4.4% Latino, 1.1% Filipino, and 3.4% other minority groups. The sample breakdown is the following: 58.0% whites, 5.6% African Americans, 15.2% Asians and Pacific Islanders, 0.8% Native Americans, 15.2% Hispanics, and 10.8% other racial groups, showing that all racial minority groups are over-sampled in the survey.

16. According to the 1990 Census information, Asian and Pacific Islanders total 7,226,986. Of the Asian Americans (6,876,394), the major subgroups are the following: Chinese 24%, Filipino 21%, Japanese 13%, Asian Indian 13%, Korean 12%, Vietnamese 9%, Cambodian 2%, Laotian 2%, Hmong 1%, Thai 1%, other Asian 4%. Of the Pacific Islander Americans (350,592), the subgroups include Polynesians, Micronesians, and Melanesians.

17. See 1990 Census Summary Tape 3C (ST3C).

18. Executive Order No. 10,925, 3 C.F.R. 448 (1959-1963 Comp.). The order established the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.

19. Executive Order No. 11,246, 3 C.F.R. 339 (1964-65 Comp.), reprinted as amended in 42 U.S.C. Section 2000e (1993).

20. As a strong advocate for class-based affirmative action, Justice Scalia states. [i]t may well be that many, or even most, of those benefited by such [class-based] programs would be members of minority races that the existing programs exclusively favor" (Scalia, 1979:156).