

## Campus Diversity: The Hidden Consensus

By John M. Carey, Katherine Clayton and Yusaku Horiuchi.  
New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019

Natasha Warikoo

Tufts University

Corresponding author. E-mail: [natasha.warikoo@tufts.edu](mailto:natasha.warikoo@tufts.edu)

(Received 26 April 2021; accepted 9 May 2021)

In *Campus Diversity* John Carey, Katherine Clayton, and Yusaku Horiuchi argue that a “hidden consensus” exists among residential college students over diversity: despite pervasive political rhetoric about culture wars and free speech conflicts on college campuses, most students support diversifying the student body and faculty. Rather than analyze that political rhetoric, the authors marshal evidence from a series of experiments in which students were asked to choose between fictional pairs of student or faculty applicants to their universities (to study or to teach). The results show that when forced to choose between admissions applicants, students were likely to give a boost to applicants of color (Black, Hispanic, and Asian); to female and nonbinary applicants; to low-income applicants; and to applicants who will be the first in their families to graduate from a 4-year college (“first generation”). Students favored applicants of color for teaching positions, as well. Of course, achievements still mattered, as measured by Scholastic Assessment Test scores and class rank for student applicants, and teaching records for faculty applicants. These achievements had the strongest influence on student preferences. Still, even across lines of difference—race, political identity, and even stated views on affirmative action—students took the applicant’s identity characteristics into consideration (even if *how much* they considered it did vary, in the expected ways).

The authors conclude that overall there is a “hidden consensus” about the importance of taking race and other forms of difference into consideration when making meritocratic selections. Furthermore, the results show that differences of opinion among students are a matter of degree (just how much to factor race into the decision), not ideology (whether or not to do so). The data in this book is compelling, and the methods are rigorous. As such, the book provides much to think about for anyone interested in campus diversity and student attitudes.

Carey and his colleagues distill student perspectives amidst the political rhetoric by using conjoint analysis, a statistical method that gives survey respondents a series of choices. Students chose between pairs of fictive applicants with different attributes. In addition to including the attributes listed above, the applicant profiles also included whether they had parents who attended the university (legacy status), their high school type (public, private, parochial), whether they were a recruited athlete and their extracurricular activities. For faculty positions, the profiles also included research records, where applicants got their degrees (choices included a range of

universities), and more. Based on the thousands of choices made by students at each university, the authors then computed the “Average Marginal Component Effect” of each attribute—in other words, just how much each attribute seemed to play a role in students’ choices.

The findings in *Campus Diversity* add complexity to the research on racial attitudes. For decades, scholars have shown that many Americans will express support for abstract ideals of racial equity and multiculturalism while maintaining opposition to specific policies to enact those ideals, such as busing for school integration, affirmative action for racial equity, and support for non-English languages to support immigrants (e.g. see Schuman, Steeh *et al.*, 1997, Citrin, Sears *et al.*, 2001, Sears and Henry 2003, Bobo, Charles *et al.*, 2012). Bonilla-Silva (2003) contends further that college-educated and younger Americans are especially susceptible to using “abstract liberalism” and “minimization” of the role that race plays in society today to justify disagreeing with race-based social policies. In a different line of research, implicit racial bias, especially a preference for Whites over Blacks, has been shown to shape decision making in a wide variety of arenas of social life (e.g. in education, see Jacoby-Senghor, Sinclair *et al.*, 2016). And, audit students that send applicants of different races in search of jobs similarly find evidence of bias against racial minorities (Pager, 2007). These theories suggest that students on residential college campuses might express support for diversity in the abstract, but reject affirmative action as a policy to ensure equity in admissions outcomes by race, and favor White applicants over applicants of color. But the conjoint analyses find the opposite. Tellingly, even students who expressed opposition to affirmative action in the post-experiment survey gave preference to Black, Hispanic, and Native American applicants over White and Asian applicants in their choices between candidates (see Figure 6.4). And, students who expressed some degree of racial resentment did not favor White candidates over candidates of color.

Further research should theorize how to make sense of these differences. My own hypothesis is that affirmative action has become a lightning rod political issue, such that our views on it are related to symbolic politics—part of our identities as “conservative” or “liberal”—rather than related to our instinctual understandings of advantage and disadvantage. Further, in the conjoint analyses, students may associate applicants of color with disadvantage, and choose accordingly; in my own research I found that U.S. college students believe college admissions should take into consideration an applicant’s available opportunities, so associating people of color with fewer opportunities may have led survey participants to give applicants of color an admissions boost (Warikoo, 2016).

Finally, it may be the case that students who feel some racial resentment, who express anti-affirmative-action beliefs, and who identify as conservative may feel, based on the political rhetoric they consume, that affirmative action has “gone too far,” even if they support a moderate level of affirmative action in practice. They may be prone to perceptions of “reverse discrimination” based on affirmative action. Indeed, in my own research, I found that even some White students admitted to Harvard and who expressed support for affirmative action held a reverse discrimination script in which they shared a view that if they had not gotten into Harvard they would have felt they had experienced racial discrimination (Warikoo, 2016). Of

course, most White applicants to Harvard, like applicants of all races, do not get in, which may fuel the belief that affirmative action has “gone too far.” But the findings in *Campus Diversity* importantly suggest that these students will still support some level of consideration of race in admissions.

The findings in *Campus Diversity* are critical to our understandings of student perspectives on college campuses, racial attitudes, and how to capture public opinion, and is essential reading for anyone interested in those areas.

## References

- Bobo L, Charles CZ, Krysan M and Simmons AD** (2012) The real record on racial attitudes. In Marsden P (ed). *Social Trends in American Life: Findings From the General Social Survey Since 1972*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 38–83.
- Bonilla-Silva E** (2003) *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Citrin J, Sears DO, Muste C and Wong C** (2001) Multiculturalism in American public opinion. *British Journal of Political Science* **31**, 247–275.
- Jacoby-Senghor, D, Sinclair, S and Shelton JN** (2016) A lesson in bias: the relationship between implicit racial bias and performance in pedagogical contexts. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* **63**, 50–55.
- Pager D** (2007) The Use of field experiments for studies of employment discrimination: contributions, critiques, and directions for the future. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* **609**, 104–133.
- Schuman H, Steeh C and Bobo L** (1997) *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Sears DO and Henry PJ** (2003) The origins of symbolic racism. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* **85**, 259–275.
- Warikoo NK** (2016) *The Diversity Bargain: And Other Dilemmas of Race, Admissions, and Meritocracy at Elite Universities*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

doi:10.1017/rep.2021.14

## Identity Politics in the United States

By Khalilah Brown-Dean. Cambridge, UK: Polity Books, 2019. 288 pp., \$69.95 cloth, \$26.95 paperback

Ismail K. White

Princeton University

Corresponding author. E-mail: [iwhite@princeton.edu](mailto:iwhite@princeton.edu)

(Received 25 January 2021; accepted 25 January 2021)

Khalilah Brown-Dean’s *Identity Politics in the United States* is a timely, clearly written and well-sourced text that is a necessary read for anyone interested in learning about or teaching the politics of social groups in the United States.