Dialectical Thinking and Fairness-Based Perspectives of Affirmative Action

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Affirmative action (AA) policies are among the most effective means for enhancing diversity and equality in the workplace, yet are also often viewed with scorn by the wider public. Fairness-based explanations for this scorn suggest AA policies provide preferential treatment to minorities, violating procedural fairness principles of consistent treatment. In other words, to promote equality in the workplace, effective AA policies promote inequality when selecting employees, and the broader public perceives this to be procedurally unfair. Given this inconsistency underlies negative reactions to AA policies, we argue that better preparing individuals to deal with inconsistencies can mitigate negative reactions to AA policies. Integrating theories from the fairness and cognitive styles literature, we demonstrate across 4 studies how dialectical thinking—a cognitive style associated with accepting inconsistencies in one’s environment—increases support for AA policies via procedural fairness perceptions. Specifically, we found support for our propositions across a variety of AA policy types (i.e., strong and weak preference policies) and when conceptualizing dialectical thinking either as an individual difference or as a state that can be primed—including being primed by the framing of the AA policy itself. We discuss theoretical contributions and insights for policy-making at government and organizational levels.

Keywords: affirmative action, diversity, equality, dialecticism, procedural fairness

Although a number of methods exist for organizations to increase diversity, few are as effective as affirmative action (AA)\(^1\) policies (Archibong & Sharps, 2013; Hinrichs, 2012; Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006). Originally created to address historical discrimination against disadvantaged groups (e.g., women, racial minorities), AA policies now also play an important role in diversifying the workplace and contributing to economic prosperity (Crosby, Iyer, Clayton, & Downing, 2003). Yet despite being highly effective, for many they are also highly reviled: The U. S. Supreme Court recently upheld a voter-approved ban on considering race in admissions to Michigan’s public universities (Barnes, 2014; Liptak, 2014), while seven other states have similar bans in place (DeSilver, 2014; though see Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, 2016). In line with negative public perceptions, research has repeatedly found that employees generally have negative reactions to workplace AA policies (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006).

A common argument for banning AA policies has been that they violate the fairness principle of equal treatment for all (e.g., Liptak, 2014). For example, both strong and weak preference AA policies—that is, using disadvantaged group status with little regard to qualifications to determine who to hire (strong preference), or using disadvantaged group status only when two candidates are equally qualified (weak preference)—have been shown to violate expectations for consistency in treatment (Bobocel, Son Hing, Davey, Stanley, & Zanna, 1998). In particular, by invoking differential treatment for applicants depending on their disadvantaged (e.g., minority) or nondisadvantaged (e.g., majority) status, both strong and weak preference AA policies treat applicants in an inconsistent manner. Such treatment violates the consistency principle of procedural justice (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Leventhal, 1980), and perceptions of inconsistency and unfair treatment are an important factor driving opposition to AA policies.

1 Also known as employment equity policies (in Canada) and positive action policies (in the United Kingdom).
policies (e.g., Bobocel et al., 1998; Cropanzano, Slaughter, & Bachiochi, 2005).

This situation captures the paradox of AA policies. To create a workplace where individuals are treated more consistently, AA policies employ inconsistent treatment when selecting employees; to establish equality in organizations, AA policies promote inequality in selection. This leads the broader public to reject policies that ultimately promote fairness because the policies are themselves unfair. In this sense, AA policies contain the seeds of their own demise: the inconsistent treatment that makes them so effective is precisely what makes them so reviled. Recognizing this, we argue that equipping individuals to deal with such inconsistencies is the best way to mitigate negative reactions to AA policies. In particular, we integrate fairness-based perspectives on AA policies with the cognitive styles literature to suggest that helping individuals think dialectically—or to adopt a cognitive style characterized by a belief in change, interconnectedness, and tolerance for and acceptance of inconsistencies in one’s environment (Choi, Koo, & Choi, 2007; Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Peng, 2010)—will improve reactions to AA policies. As higher dialectical thinkers view changing circumstances and inconsistencies as the natural state of the world and are more likely to take a holistic view, the paradox created by AA policies is less likely to be perceived as being unfair or even as being contradictory—meaning they are more likely to support AA policies.

Our research makes three major contributions to the literature. First, we contribute to the AA literature by integrating fairness-based views of AA policies with the cognitive styles literature (particularly, dialecticism). In so doing, we uncover a way to improve reactions to AA policies, and ultimately argue for a reorientation in the AA literature from the type of AA policies toward the framing of AA policies. Second, our work contributes to the fairness literature (particularly, procedural fairness) by illustrating how dialectical thinking influences procedural fairness perceptions in reaction to inconsistencies. More broadly, given reactions to inconsistencies is a central feature of numerous theories used in organizational research (e.g., self-verification and cognitive dissonance theories), our findings hold implications for a variety of literatures beyond AA and organizational fairness—a theme we return to in our discussion.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our research speaks to a major issue affecting organizations and society today: reactions to AA policies. AA policies represent one of the most effective initiatives to increase diversity and equality (Kalev et al., 2006), yet attacks on and bans of AA policies undermine or remove one of the best tools organizations have to promote diversity and equality. Our work not only illustrates how dialectical thinking ameliorates reactions to AA policies, but it also provides actionable research organizations can use to craft AA policies in such a way as to create more positive reactions.

AA Policies: A Fairness-Based View

AA policies promoting employment opportunities for traditionally disadvantaged groups have been implemented worldwide, with the specific groups promoted by such policies differing across countries (Jain, Sloane, Horwitz, Tagger, & Weiner, 2003; Sowell, 2004). In Canada, for example, AA policies promote the hiring of women, racial minorities, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities (Jain et al., 2003); in the United States, AA policies promote the hiring of women, racial minorities, people with disabilities, Vietnam era veterans, and special disabled veterans (Sowell, 2004). Yet regardless of the specific groups promoted, the basic premise of AA policies is that promoted groups have prospered less partly due to systemic advantages given to other groups (e.g., males or Caucasians). The aim of AA policies is to redress these inequalities by giving an advantage in employment to traditionally disadvantaged groups.

Past work has distinguished different types of AA policies, including weak preference policies, strong preference policies, and identity-blind or “no preference” policies (i.e., policies that encourage applications from candidates with diverse backgrounds, but do not give preferential treatment to any applications; Harrison et al., 2006; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995). In both strong and weak preference policies, group status is used (to varying degrees) to inform who receives benefits (e.g., a job offer). Although strong preference policies are illegal in the United States, Canada, and many other countries (Pyburn, Ployhart, & Kravitz, 2008), strong preference policies are nevertheless what most individuals think of when AA policies are mentioned (Aberson & Haag, 2003; Unzueta, Lowery, & Knowles, 2008).

Regardless of whether AA policies are weak or strong, they are highly controversial and invoke heated negative reactions and opposition (Harrison et al., 2006). These reactions are particularly influenced by perceptions of procedural fairness, or concerns over the fairness of the procedures for allocating resources (Leventhal, 1980). By having different hiring rules for applicants from disadvantaged and nondisadvantaged groups, AA policies introduce inconsistent procedures that are not viewed as fair (Bobocel et al., 1998). In particular, weak preference policies violate the consistency principle of procedural fairness because applicants from disadvantaged and nondisadvantaged backgrounds are treated differently once they have the same qualifications (i.e., applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds are chosen over applicants from advantaged backgrounds if they have equal qualifications). Similarly, strong preference policies violate the consistency principle of procedural fairness because applicants from disadvantaged and advantaged backgrounds are treated differently even when they do not have the same qualifications (i.e., they allow for less qualified candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds to be hired over more qualified candidates from advantaged backgrounds). These violated perceptions of procedural fairness can have powerful effects: For example, procedural fairness has a greater impact on beneficiaries’ intentions to apply and organizational attractiveness than distributive fairness (Cropanzano et al., 2005), is a primary factor influencing whether employees consider suing their employers (Bies & Tyler, 1993), and change in procedural fairness perceptions affect job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions more strongly than other fairness dimensions (Hausknecht, Sturman, & Roberson, 2011).

2 In addition, strong preference AA policies violate the merit principle, that is, distributive fairness concerns over fairness of allocation of resources (Adams, 1965; Greenberg & Cohen, 1982), and thus tend to be even more contentious and opposed policies than weak preference AA policies.
Notably, the key assumption underlying fairness-based views of AA policies is that inconsistent treatment is itself likely to be perceived as not being fair. This assumption is probably well-founded: consistent treatment, as mentioned, is one of the bedrock principles associated with procedural fairness (Leventhal, 1980). However, this also implies that if inconsistent treatment is made palatable, then AA policies will be viewed as fair. Along these lines, we argue that dialectical thinkers are less likely to view preferential treatment as unfair.

**Dialecticism**

Dialectical thinking is a cognitive style characterized by viewing the world as being interconnected and in flux (Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Spencer-Rodgers, Srivastava, et al., 2010). Also referred to as holistic thinking, higher dialectical thinkers view objects and events in life as being inherently interrelated, where any one event or object is connected via relationships to any number of other events or objects, all asserting influence on each other (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). As a result, higher dialectical thinkers focus less on specific objects but rather on the larger, holistic picture; the world is perceived as “continuous and interpenetrating [by those] who view themselves as part of a larger whole” (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001, p. 294). As the nature of the relationships between objects are frequently in motion, reality is similarly viewed as fluctuating: while something may be true today, it may be false tomorrow, as the world is unstable and ever changing from one stage to another (Nisbett et al., 2001).

As change is viewed as the natural state of being, so too is contradiction viewed as the natural state of affairs for higher dialectical thinkers: what is bad can be good, what is small can be large, and what is beautiful can be ugly, given such judgments depend on the context in which they are made and the context itself is ever-changing (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). Consequently, higher dialectical thinkers are less likely to perceive the simultaneous existence of seemingly incompatible ideas as being inconsistent or unexpected, recognizing that the existence of such incompatibilities are simply part of an ever-changing world. For example, Eastern Taoist philosophy embraces ideas that lower dialectical thinkers would instead consider to be inconsistencies, as seen in sayings like “To shrink something you need to expand it first” and “To abolish something you need to flourish it first” (Ji, Nisbett, & Su, 2001, p. 450). Similarly, research demonstrates higher dialectical thinkers endorse seemingly inconsistent ideas such as that people are both inherently good and bad (Spencer-Rodgers, Williams, & Peng, 2012) and are less surprised by reversals and inconsistencies in the behavior of others (Choi & Nisbett, 2000). Past research also suggests that dialecticism has broad implications for inconsistencies in self-perceptions and experiences (Choi et al., 2007; Spencer-Rodgers, Srivastava, et al., 2010), with higher dialectical thinkers exhibiting more ambivalent self-descriptions and responding (Hamamura, Heine, & Paulhus, 2008; Spencer-Rodgers, Peng, Wang, & Hou, 2004) and having more complex emotional experiences that involve both pleasant and unpleasant emotions (Hui, Fok, & Bond, 2009), as well as lower psychological well-being (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2004) and higher in-group derogation (Ma-Kellams, Spencer-Rodgers, & Peng, 2011).

In contrast, lower dialectical thinkers expect phenomena to remain constant, as events and objects are thought to possess inherent properties (e.g., “good” or “bad”) that are relatively independent from other objects; such properties are viewed as relatively immutable, given change is less integral to their world view (Peng & Nisbett, 1999). As such, lower dialectical thinkers are comparatively more likely to identify inconsistencies; an event that possesses both positives and negatives stands out in a world view where objects and events are viewed as stable and possessing independent characteristics (Nisbett et al., 2001). Similarly, lower dialectical thinkers readily identify and discount inconsistent events (e.g., they are less likely to expect that chess champions will lose a game, or that a poor child will become rich; Ji et al., 2001).

Although dialectical thinking tends to be more prevalent in East Asian than Western cultures, like all cultural differences, it also varies substantially within cultures (Spencer-Rodgers, Srivastava, et al., 2010). Moreover, such differences in dialectical thinking are only weakly related to other cultural constructs such as collectivism and interdependent self-construals when measured within cultures (e.g., r = .15-.19; Choi et al., 2007). Past research has also shown that dialectical thinking can be reliably measured as an individual difference, as well as be a primed state (e.g., Cheng, 2009; English & Chen, 2007; Spencer-Rodgers, Boucher, Mori, Wang, & Peng, 2009).

**The Role of Dialecticism in Reactions to AA Policies**

As noted previously, the fairness-based perspective of reactions to AA policies argues that AA policies violate consistency principles of procedural fairness by giving an explicit preference to disadvantaged groups in employment decisions. Such policies may also be viewed as inconsistent in that they represent a contradiction: inequality in hiring practices is required for equality in employment to be reached. In reaction to such inconsistencies, AA policies are viewed as lacking procedural fairness, and hence are not supported. However, this perspective takes as a given that preferential treatment is seen as violating consistency principles of procedural fairness.

We suggest that higher dialectical thinkers may not perceive preferential treatment in hiring as being unfair. Higher dialectical thinkers are comfortable with inconsistencies in their environment and view inconsistencies and contradictions as a consequence of the interrelated and changing nature of the world (Peng & Nisbett, 1999); what is viewed as providing inconsistent treatment or being unfair in one context may be viewed as providing consistent treatment or being fair in a broader context. As such, preferential treatment in AA policies may not be seen as providing inconsistent treatment or unfair when considering the broader goal of achieving equality in employment. In turn, if perceptions of procedural fairness are preserved, higher dialectical thinkers should be more likely to support that policy. On the other hand, from the perspective of lower dialectical thinkers this type of inconsistency is likely to be extremely salient: Lower dialectical thinkers are not comfortable with inconsistencies in their environment and when they face inconsistencies they seek to resolve them (Spencer-Rodgers, Srivastava, et al., 2010). Thus, when presented with an AA policy that provides inconsistent treatment for different groups, lower dialectical thinkers may be unable to see how something that is unfair can also be fair and not support the policy.
Overview of Studies

Overall, the logic we have developed suggests lower dialectical thinkers will be less likely than higher dialectical thinkers to support both weak and strong preference AA policies due to undermined perceptions of procedural fairness. Moreover, because dialectical thinking addresses the core issue driving negative reactions to AA policies (i.e., perceived violations of the consistency rule) we expect that the level of support higher dialectical thinkers provide to AA policies should be comparable to the level of support higher and lower dialectical thinkers provide to identity-blind diversity policies—at least for weak preference policies. Support for strong preference policies, on the other hand, is likely to be lower than support provided to identity-blind diversity policies, because strong preference policies also violate principles of merit (i.e., distributive fairness) by considering group membership before qualifications for the job.

To test our theoretical model, we conducted four studies in the context of gender-based weak and strong preference AA policies. We first examined whether dialectical thinking, measured as an individual difference, mitigates negative reactions to a weak preference AA policy (Study 1) and a strong preference policy (Study 2) due to increased perceptions of procedural fairness. In Study 3 and 4, we took an interventionist approach and examined whether participants primed to think in a dialectical way would support an AA policy more than participants in the control condition due to enhanced perceptions of procedural fairness, and in particular due to enhanced perceptions of consistent procedures.

To begin, in Study 1 we sought to empirically demonstrate that higher dialectical thinkers, compared to lower dialectical thinkers, are more likely to support a weak preference AA policy due to enhanced perceptions of procedural fairness, but that such differences do not exist for a comparison identity-blind diversity policy. Identity-blind policies are a common comparison policy for AA policies (see Hidieg & Ferris, 2014; Konrad & Linnehan, 1995) as they present a commonly used diversity policy with the similar aims as AA policies, but do not entail using any employee demographics to make employment-related decisions. As an identity-blind policy does not violate consistency principles of justice, there is no reason to expect that dialectical thinking should influence support for the identity-blind policy. In line with the AA literature, we conceptualize support for the AA policy in terms of favorable attitudes toward, and behavioral intentions that promote, the AA policy (Harrison et al., 2006; Hidieg, Michela, & Ferris, 2011). Thus, in Study 1 we tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Higher dialectical thinkers (a) have more favorable attitudes toward, and (b) endorse more behavioral intentions to promote, an AA policy compared to lower dialectical thinkers; there are no such differences for an identity-blind diversity policy.

Hypothesis 2: Higher dialectical thinkers find an AA policy more procedurally fair compared to lower dialectical thinkers; there are no such differences for an identity-blind policy.

Study 1

Method

Participants and procedure. Participants were 129 business undergraduate students (79 women; average age: 19.88 years; average work experience: 2.64 years) at a Canadian university who received course credit for participation. Participants were enrolled in a co-operative (co-op) education program, meaning our sample consisted of actual job applicants who were applying for 4-month full-time jobs. Fifty-one participants identified as Caucasian, 36 as East Asian, 14 as South Asian, eight as Southeast Asian, three as Middle Eastern, two as Hispanic, and 10 as mixed (five unreported). The study consisted of two online surveys. Survey 1 assessed participants’ dialectical thinking. Two weeks after Survey 1, participants were emailed a link to Survey 2, where participants were randomly presented one of two policies ostensibly under development by their university co-op program: a gender-based weak preference AA policy or an identity-blind diversity policy (see below). Participants subsequently completed questionnaires assessing their perceptions of procedural fairness, attitudes, and behavioral intentions to promote the presented policy. All studies reported in this article were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Wilfrid Laurier University. The protocol number was 3328 and the title of the study was “Workplace Policies.”

Materials.

Gender-based AA policy. We used a weak preference AA policy developed in past research (see Hidieg & Ferris, 2014, 2016). The AA policy related to hiring students into co-op jobs with preference given to women. Co-op jobs are full-time, paid, semester-long job placements related to students’ field of study where students gain practical skills and work experience. These jobs are highly valuable for students’ future careers, and an AA policy that affects co-op hiring would be seen as very relevant and influential on their career. The AA policy (see Appendix A) described the aspects of and rationale for a new AA policy ostensibly under development at the university. Specifically, participants read that the proportion of men and women in managerial/professional positions in the region were 65% and 35%, respectively. The policy then suggested that for women to be hired according to their rates of university graduation and other related factors, the rate of their hiring should be 55% in favor of women. The policy thus proposed companies hiring students through the co-op center should favor hiring women over men to begin to redress the unequal representation of women in the workforce—with the caveat that this preferential hiring should only occur when the candidates possessed equal qualifications.

Identity-blind diversity policy. In line with the AA policy, the identity-blind policy also pertained to co-op positions. It proposed to promote diversity by encouraging students with different backgrounds to apply for co-op positions, but explic-
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It is stated that demographics would not influence hiring decisions (see Appendix A).

**Measures.** All measures in our article use a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (**strongly disagree**) to 7 (**strongly agree**). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables in Study 1.

**Dialectical thinking.** We administered a 32-item Dialectical Self Scale (DSS) developed by Spencer-Rodgers, Srivastava, et al. (2010) to measure individual differences in dialectical thinking. Sample items include “I often find that things will contradict each other” and “Believing two things that contradict each other is illogical” (reverse scored; \( \alpha = .80 \)). The scale was designed to be a global measure of dialecticism reflecting an individual’s tolerance and acceptance of contradictions and change (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2009).

**Procedural fairness.** We used a two-item procedural fairness measure developed by Cropanzano et al. (2005) to specifically measure procedural fairness of an AA policy. The two items were “This policy represents a procedure that is just” and “This policy established a fair decision-making process.” Given that this was only a two-item measure, it was appropriate to assess reliability with the interitem correlation (Nunnally, 1978). The Pearson \( r \) of .88 between the two items exceeded the \( r = .25 \) value recommended as a minimum \( r \) between the items of a two-item composite (Nunnally, 1978).

**Attitudes.** We measured attitudes toward the AA policy with a three-item scale (\( \alpha = .90 \)) developed and used in past research (e.g., “My opinion of developing this proposed policy for student hiring is favorable”; Hideg et al., 2011; Hideg & Ferris, 2014).

**Behavioral intentions.** We measured behavioral intentions with an eight-item scale (\( \alpha = .89 \)) developed and used in past research (Hideg et al., 2011; Hideg & Ferris, 2014). Participants rated how likely they would be to engage in behaviors that promote the AA policy (e.g., “Volunteer for one day at an information booth to create public awareness about this policy”).

**Results.** We conducted hierarchical moderated regression analyses testing for interactions between dialectical thinking and the policy condition (AA policy vs. identity-blind policy) in predicting attitudes, behavioral intentions, and procedural fairness (see Table 2). We mean-centered dialectical thinking and controlled for gender because past research shows a robust effect of gender on support for AA policies with women supporting AA policies more than men (see Harrison et al., 2006, for a meta-analysis). In addition, past research suggests that procedural violations that benefit an individual may positively bias that individual’s reactions to the procedure (Ployhart & Ryan, 1998), further suggesting that women may react more positively to AA policies promoting women.

**Interaction results in predicting attitudes, behavioral intentions, and procedural fairness.** In predicting attitudes toward the policy, there was a significant interaction between dialectical thinking and the policy condition, \( b = 1.31, t(124) = 3.22, p = .002 (f^2 = .08) \). To interpret the interaction, we graphed it at high (+1 SD; higher dialectical thinkers) and low (−1 SD; lower dialectical thinkers) levels of dialectical thinking. As expected, higher dialectical thinkers had more favorable attitudes toward the AA policy compared to lower dialectical thinkers, \( \beta = .32, t(124) = 2.83, p = .005 \), although there were no differences within the identity-blind diversity policy, \( \beta = −.21, t(124) = −1.75, p = .082 \) (see Figure 1A). We further examined differences in attitudes between the two policies within higher and lower dialectical thinkers. As expected, lower dialectical thinkers had less favorable attitudes toward the AA policy compared to the identity-blind diversity policy, \( \beta = −1.01, t(124) = 4.42, p < .001 \), while there were no such differences for higher dialectical thinkers, \( \beta = −.05, t(124) = −.39, p = .812 \).

In predicting behavioral intentions, there was a significant interaction between dialectical thinking and the policy condition, \( b = 1.20, t(124) = 2.69, p = .008 (f^2 = .06) \). As expected, higher dialectical thinkers endorsed more behavioral intentions to promote the AA policy compared to lower dialectical thinkers, \( \beta = .35, t(124) = 2.83, p = .005 \), although there were no differences within the identity-blind diversity policy, \( \beta = −.11, t(124) = −.92, p = .357 \) (see Figure 1B). Lower dialectical thinkers were also less likely to endorse behavioral intentions promoting the AA policy compared to the identity-blind diversity policy, \( \beta = −.65, t(124) = −2.39, p = .009 \), while there were no such differences.

To ensure that the two policies were perceived as intended, 89 U.S. employees recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk were randomly assigned to either the AA policy condition or the identity-blind policy condition and subsequently asked to rate to what extent they agreed with the following two statements on a 7-point scale (1 = **strongly disagree**, 7 = **strongly agree**): “This proposed policy will hire equally qualified female applicants over male applicants” and “In this proposed policy applicants’ demographics will not influence hiring decisions.” As expected, participants in the AA condition were more likely to perceive the policy as promoting the hiring of women over men if they have equal qualifications (\( M = 3.90, SD = 1.48 \)) than participants in the identity-blind condition (\( M = 3.25, SD = 2.07 \)).\(^3\) As expected, participants in the identity-blind condition were more likely to perceive that the policy did not use demographics in hiring decisions (\( M = 6.15, SD = 1.12 \)) than participants in the AA condition (\( M = 2.45, SD = 1.93 \)).\(^3\)

\(^3\) We also ran all analyses controlling for the cultural background of participants (coded with two dummy variables comparing Caucasians with East Asians, and Caucasians with other minorities), but the pattern and significance of results remained the same regardless of whether we control or do not control for cultural background in all studies reported in this paper. For parsimony, we present analyses in all of our studies without controlling for cultural background; a full set of analyses controlling for cultural background is available from Ivona Hideg.

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### Table 1

**Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations (Study 1)**

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<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td>Dialectical thinking</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy condition</td>
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<td>.50</td>
<td>23*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
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<td>1.29</td>
<td>−.12</td>
<td>−.30</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral intentions</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>−.06</td>
<td>.67*</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedural fairness</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>−.09</td>
<td>−.36</td>
<td>.83*</td>
<td>.56*</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.49</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.24*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 129. Policy condition is coded as 0 = identity-blind diversity policy and 1 = gender-based affirmative action policy. Gender is coded as 0 = men and 1 = women.

*p < .05.
for higher dialectical thinkers, $\beta = .28$, $t(124) = .95$, $p = .255$. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

In predicting procedural fairness, there was a significant interaction between dialectical thinking and the policy condition, $b = 1.45$, $t(124) = 3.50$, $p = .001 (\eta^2 = .10)$. As expected, higher dialectical thinkers perceived the AA policy to be more procedurally fair compared to lower dialectical thinkers, $\beta = .27$, $t(124) = 2.27$, $p = .019$. Unexpectedly, higher dialectical thinkers perceived the identity-blind diversity policy to be less procedurally fair compared to lower dialectical thinkers, $\beta = -.28$, $t(124) = -2.59$, $p = .011$ (see Figure 2). As expected, lower dialectical thinkers perceived the AA policy to be less procedurally fair compared to the identity-blind diversity policy, $\beta = -1.29$, $t(124) = -5.30$, $p < .001$, although there were no such differences for higher

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Behavioral intentions</th>
<th>Procedural fairness</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>.64*</td>
<td>.24*</td>
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<td>Step 2</td>
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<td>-.29*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dialectical thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
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<td>.17</td>
<td>-.07</td>
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<td>Policy Condition $\times$ Dialectical Thinking</td>
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<td>.36*</td>
<td>.41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total $R^2$</td>
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</table>

Note. Gender is coded as 0 = men and 1 = women. Policy condition is coded as 0 = identity-blind diversity policy and 1 = gender-based affirmative action policy. $N = 129$.

$p < .05$.

Figure 1: An interaction between dialectical thinking and policy condition in predicting attitudes toward the policy (A) and behavioral intentions to promote the policy (B) in Study 1.
We further found evidence for the overall moderated mediation model in that lower dialectical thinkers perceived an AA policy as less procedurally fair than the identity-blind diversity policy, whereas lower dialectical thinkers supported the AA policy less compared to the identity-blind diversity policy. This suggests that dialecticism was effective in mitigating negative reactions to the AA policy. We also tested for 3-way interactions between dialectical thinking, policy condition, and gender in predicting support for the AA policy and procedural fairness, to examine whether the effects differed by participants’ gender (i.e., a nonbeneficiary or a beneficiary of the policy). There were no significant 3-way interactions in predicting any of the outcomes. We also tested whether our effects depended on participants’ gender in all of our studies and we did not find an interaction in any of the studies between dialectical thinking and gender in predicting any of the studies outcomes. Given that these results were nonsignificant we do not present them in the paper, but full analyses and results are available from Ivona Hideg.

6 Although we did not hypothesize it, we also conducted an exploratory analysis to see if dialectical thinking moderated the path from procedural fairness to our outcomes. In both Study 1 and Study 2, these analyses were not significant. For more information, please contact Ivona Hideg.
South Asian, and one each as West Indian and Middle Eastern (one unreported). The procedure was identical to Study 1, except we used a strong preference policy (see below) in place of Study 1’s weak preference policy.

**Materials.** The strong preference AA policy (see Appendix B) resembled the corresponding policy from Study 1 with two differences. First, in contrast to Study 1’s AA policy that proposed to hire women over men if they have equal qualifications (i.e., a weak preference policy), the AA policy in Study 2 proposed to hire women over men if they have minimum qualifications even if that means hiring a less qualified female applicant over a male applicant. This manipulation of a strong preference policy was adopted from Bobocel et al. (1998; see Study 1). Second, the proposed policy would not apply to their own job search and hiring (as was the case in Study 1), but rather the policy was framed as being for the hiring process in a company not related to them called INDSCO (this name was taken from previous research on AA using a company not familiar to participants; James, Brief, Dietz, & Cohen, 2001). The identity-blind policy (see Appendix B) proposed to promote diversity by encouraging applicants with different backgrounds to apply for jobs, but that demographics would not influence hiring decisions.

**Measures.** We used the same measures as in Study 1 to assess dialectical thinking ($\alpha = .90$), procedural fairness ($r = .95$), attitudes ($\alpha = .95$), and behavioral intentions ($\alpha = .93$). Table 3 presents descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables in Study 2.

**Results**

**Interaction results in predicting attitudes, behavioral intentions, and procedural fairness.** In predicting attitudes toward the policy, there was a significant interaction between dialectical thinking and the policy condition, $b = .58, t(265) = 2.12, p = .035$ ($f^2 = 0.01$; see Table 4). As expected, higher dialectical thinkers had more favorable attitudes toward the strong preference AA policy compared to lower dialectical thinkers, $\beta = .15$, $t(265) = 2.07, p = .039$, while there were no differences within the identity-blind diversity policy, $\beta = -.05$, $t(265) = -.85, p = .394$ (see Figure 3). Also, as expected both higher dialectical thinkers, $\beta = -1.01$, $t(265) = -7.43, p < .001$, and lower dialectical thinkers, $\beta = -1.42, t(265) = -7.43, p < .001$, had less favorable attitudes toward the strong preference AA policy compared to the identity-blind policy.

In predicting behavioral intentions, there was unexpectedly no significant interaction between dialectical thinking and the policy condition, $b = -.38, t(265) = 1.35, p = .177$ ($f^2 = 0.004$; see Table 4). In predicting procedural fairness, there was a significant interaction between dialectical thinking and the policy condition, $b = .60, t(265) = 2.23, p = .027$ ($f^2 = 0.02$; see Table 4). As expected, higher dialectical thinkers perceived the strong preference AA policy to be more procedurally fair compared to lower dialectical thinkers, $\beta = .15$, $t(265) = 2.23, p = .026$, while there were no differences within the identity-blind diversity policy, $\beta = -0.53$, $t(265) = -0.84, p = .401$ (see Figure 4). Further, as expected both higher dialectical thinkers, $\beta = -1.09$, $t(265) = -8.44, p < .001$, and lower dialectical thinkers, $\beta = -1.50, t(265) = -11.60, p < .001$, found the strong preference AA policy less procedurally fair than the identity-blind diversity policy.

**Testing the moderated mediation model.** Finally, we tested moderated mediation using bootstrapping procedures. When predicting attitudes, as expected, the conditional indirect effect was significant in the strong preference AA policy condition (conditional indirect effect = .41, 95% CI = .01, .88), but not in the identity-blind diversity policy (conditional indirect effect = -.14, 95% CI = -.38, .20). When predicting behavioral intentions, the conditional indirect effect was significant in the strong preference AA policy condition (conditional indirect effect = .28, 95% CI = .001, .61), but not in the identity-blind diversity policy (conditional indirect effect = -.09, 95% CI = -.25, .11). Thus, higher dialectical thinkers, compared to lower dialectical thinkers, showed more support for the strong preference AA policy due to higher procedural fairness perceptions. These results support Hypothesis 3.

**Discussion**

The results of Study 2 largely replicated our Study 1 findings using a strong preference AA policy in a sample of American employees. Namely, employees higher on dialectical thinking

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*Note. N = 270. Policy condition is coded as 0 = identity-blind diversity policy and 1 = gender-based affirmative action policy. Gender is coded as 0 = men and 1 = women. *p < .05.*

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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**Note.** N = 270. Policy condition is coded as 0 = identity-blind diversity policy and 1 = gender-based affirmative action policy. Gender is coded as 0 = men and 1 = women.

7 In Study 2 we also examined whether tolerance for contradiction specifically underlies our effects of dialectical thinking by conducting interaction analyses using the subdimensions of DSS. In particular, although DSS is construed as an overall measure of dialecticism, it consists of three related subdimensions: tolerance for contradiction, cognitive change, and behavioral change. Our subdimension analyses found that interactions involving the contradiction subdimension, and not the cognitive and behavioral change subdimensions, were significant, providing evidence that it is the contradiction subdimension that seems to be the most immediate driver of our effect. We did not conduct these analyses in Study 1 because the reliability of the subdimensions in Study 1 were low, suggesting that analyses would not be very meaningful. For a full set of results involving the subdimensions, please contact Ivona Hideg.

8 We replicated Study 2 in a separate sample of 376 undergraduate students to test whether the following individual differences may be influencing our results: justice sensitivity, justice orientation, moral identity, social dominance orientation, and openness to experience. We found that controlling for these variables did not change our results: higher dialectical thinkers, compared to lower dialectical thinkers, showed more support for the strong preference AA policy due to higher procedural fairness, and the mediation model was not significant for the identity-blind diversity policy while still controlling for the above listed individual differences (and gender). For a full set of results please contact Ivona Hideg.
found the strong preference AA policy more procedurally fair and had more favorable attitudes toward the policy compared to lower dialectical thinkers, but there were no differences between higher and lower dialectical employees in supporting a comparison, identity-blind diversity policy. We also found support for the overall moderated mediation model in which perceptions of procedural fairness underlie the effects of dialecticism on support for the AA policy. Further, as expected we found that in contrast to weak preference AA policies where dialectical thinking effectively completely mitigated any negative reactions to (i.e., there were no differences in support between the weak preference AA policy and the identity-blind diversity policy for higher dialectical thinkers), negative reactions to strong preference AA policies were only partially mitigated (i.e., higher dialectical thinkers were still less likely to support the strong AA policy than the identity-blind diversity policy).

Unexpectedly, we did not find a significant interaction between dialecticism and policy type in predicting behavioral intentions. This could be due to the fact that unlike in Study 1 participants in Study 2 had no personal stakes in the proposed policy (i.e., it did not relate to their own hiring and hence would not influence their own outcomes). Yet, it should be noted that behavioral intentions were indirectly influenced through perceptions of procedural fairness. That is, employees higher on dialectical thinking, compared to employees lower on dialectical thinking, endorsed more behavioral intentions to promote the AA policy via higher perceptions of procedural fairness. Thus, excluding the interaction predicting behavioral intentions in Study 2, the broad pattern of results across both Study 1 and Study 2 largely support our hypotheses.

Given the beneficial effects of dialecticism for support of diversity policies demonstrated thus far, in Study 3 we take an interventionist approach and examine whether participants primed to think dialectically would support an AA policy. By doing so, we also provide stronger evidence that dialecticism, rather than an unmeasured variable related to dialecticism, is influencing support for the AA policy (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). In Study 3, we randomly exposed participants to either a dialectical or nondialectical prime and then measured their perceptions of procedural fairness and support for the AA policy. Given the results of Studies 1 and 2 indicate dialectical thinking matters for reactions to AA (but not identity-blind) policies, and given our focus in Study 3 was on manipulating dialecticism, in Study 3 we focused only on reactions to AA policies. We also returned to using a weak preference AA policy, given weak preference policies are more typical of policies used in organizations (as strong preference policies are typically illegal). Specifically, we tested the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 4:** Participants primed to think dialectically have (a) more favorable attitudes and (b) endorse more behavioral intentions that promote an AA policy than participants in a control condition.

![Figure 3](image1.png) **Figure 3.** An interaction between dialectical thinking and policy condition in predicting attitudes toward the policy in Study 2.

![Figure 4](image2.png) **Figure 4.** An interaction between dialectical thinking and policy condition in predicting perceptions of procedural fairness in Study in Study 2.
Hypothesis 5: Participants primed to think dialectically find an AA policy more procedurally fair than participants in a control condition.

Hypothesis 6: Procedural fairness mediates the relation between dialectical (vs. control) condition and (a) attitudes and (b) behavioral intentions that promote an AA policy.

In Study 3 we also tested whether the consistency principle of procedural fairness is what underlies the effect of dialecticism on support for the AA policy. In our theoretical development, we have suggested lower dialectical thinkers (compared to higher dialectical thinkers) react negatively to preferential treatment because it signals that AA policy procedures (i.e., giving preferences and undermining employment opportunities of one group) are not consistent with the overall goal of providing equality for everyone, which undermines support for the AA policy. Study 3 directly tests whether our dialectical prime enhances perceptions of consistency in procedures. Finally, in Study 3 we also examine the possibility that distributive fairness, instead of procedural fairness, underlies the effect of dialecticism on support for the AA policy. Although we did not expect that our dialectical prime would influence perceptions of distributive fairness because outcomes of the selection process are not known in our studies (i.e., participants are in the process of applying for co-op jobs for the next semester, but they still did not know their or others’ hiring outcomes), we nevertheless examine the role of distributive fairness as it is possible that the AA policy affected participants’ anticipated outcomes (Shapiro & Kirkman, 2001).

Study 3

Method

Participants and procedure. Participants were 92 business undergraduate students (46 women; average age: 20.28 years; average work experience: 2.65 years) at a Canadian university who received course credit for participation. A total of 96 participants completed the study, but we excluded 4 participants who did not correctly answer a manipulation check question regarding what group the AA policy targets, suggesting that they did not read the AA policy. Thirty-three participants reported their ethnicity as Caucasian, 23 as South Asians, 18 as East Asians, four as Middle Eastern, two as African American, one as Southeast Asian, one as Hispanic, and three as mixed (seven unreported). The study took place in a research laboratory. After consenting to participate, participants were randomly exposed to either a dialectical prime or place in a research laboratory. After consenting to participate, participants were randomly exposed to either a dialectical prime or a control prime (see below). Following the priming task, all participants completed questionnaires described below.

Materials: Priming task. To prime dialectical thinking, we used a priming task developed and validated by Spina et al. (2010). Participants were informed that they would complete a brief writing task; all participants read the following: “Getting into a competitive university such as [university] is a major achievement. Many high school students do not make it into any university at all, and a large number of applicants to [university] are turned away every year.” Following this, participants in the dialectical prime condition were instructed to list the three most significant events in their life that enabled them to be accepted to the university. They were further instructed to describe how these events were interconnected, how they influenced each other, and how they were interacting and potentially contradicting in influencing outcomes. Thus, participants were primed to think in a very interconnected, changing, and potentially contradictory way, which is a key feature of dialecticism. Participants in the control condition were exposed to a neutral writing task instruction and wrote about contradictions in the dialectical prime condition were primed to think in a very interconnected, changing, and potentially contrary way, which is a key feature of dialecticism. Participants in the control condition were exposed to an analytical thinking style prime. They were instructed to list one major event in their life that enabled them to be accepted to the university and describe how that single event influenced their university acceptance. Thus, participants in the comparison condition were primed to think in a linear way where there is only one straightforward cause for their success.

Measures. We used the same measures as previously to assess procedural fairness (r = .86), attitudes (r = .92), and behavioral intentions (r = .93). To assess consistency perceptions, we adapted one item from Colquitt’s (2001) procedural justice measure that specifically assesses the consistency principle: “This proposed policy suggests consistent procedures.” We used a two-item measure developed and validated by Cropanzano et al. (2005) to assess distributive fairness of an AA policy, consisting of the following items: “This proposed policy would give people what they deserve” (r = .40). Table 5 presents descriptive statistics and correlations for all variables in Study 3.

Results

Manipulation check. To check whether participants followed instructions and wrote about contradictions in the dialectical prime condition, we coded participants’ writing task. Two independent judges (i.e., undergraduate students) rated whether or not participants’ writings were about contradictions using the following question: “Did participants’ writing contain any inconsistencies/contradictions?” using a “yes” (coded as 1) or “no” (coded as 0) scale. Intra-class correlation (Bliwise, 2000) was significant and high (.82), providing evidence for inter-rater reliability. The results showed that participants’ writings contained more inconsistencies and contradictions in the dialectical prime condition (M = .95, SD = .19) than in the control (analytical) prime condition (M = .15, SD = .31), t(87) = −1.57, p < .001, d = 3.11. These results

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations (Study 3)

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<td>.69*</td>
<td>.45*</td>
<td>.69*</td>
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<td>.52*</td>
<td>.49*</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.51*</td>
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</table>

Note. N = 92. Dialectical prime is coded as 0 = control (analytical) prime and 1 = dialectical prime. Gender is coded as 0 = men and 1 = women.

*p < .05.
suggest that participants followed instructions and thus were exposed to key aspects of dialectical thinking in the dialectical prime condition.

Dialectical priming, procedural fairness, and support for the AA policy. We tested for differences in support for the AA policy and in perceptions of procedural fairness between the two priming conditions using analyses of covariance where we controlled for gender as Study 1 and 2. As expected, participants in the dialectical prime had more favorable attitudes toward the AA policy ($M = 4.31, SD = 1.48$) than participants in the control (analytical) prime ($M = 3.92, SD = 1.50$), $F(1, 89) = 6.65, p = .012$ ($\eta^2 = .07$). Consistent with past research women ($M = 4.87, SD = 1.26$) had more favorable attitudes toward the AA policy than men ($M = 3.32, SD = 1.31$), $F(1, 89) = 39.93, p < .001$ ($\eta^2 = .31$).

Also as expected, participants in the dialectical prime endorsed more behavioral intentions that promote the AA policy ($M = 3.25, SD = 1.59$) than participants in the control prime ($M = 2.74, SD = 1.55$), $F(1, 89) = 8.13, p = .005$ ($\eta^2 = .08$). Consistent with past research results, women ($M = 3.75, SD = 1.56$) endorsed more behavioral intentions than men ($M = 2.20, SD = 1.18$), $F(1, 89) = 35.85, p < .001$ ($\eta^2 = .29$). Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Supporting Hypothesis 5, participants in the dialectical prime perceived the AA policy as more procedurally fair ($M = 4.43, SD = 1.24$) than participants in the control prime ($M = 4.18, SD = 1.53$), $F(1, 89) = 4.24, p = .042$ ($\eta^2 = .05$). Consistent with past research results women ($M = 5.02, SD = 1.12$) perceived the AA policy as more procedurally fair than men ($M = 3.57, SD = 1.29$), $F(1, 89) = 37.90, p < .001$ ($\eta^2 = .30$).

Finally, we tested our mediation predictions with the bias-corrected bootstrapping technique (with 10,000 samples; Hayes, 2013). There was a significant indirect effect of a dialectical (vs. control) prime on attitudes (indirect effect $= .43, 95\% CI = .02, .85$) and behavioral intentions (indirect effect $= .29, 95\% CI = .03, .65$) through procedural fairness perceptions. Thus, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

Dialectical priming, consistency perceptions, and distributive fairness. An additional goal of Study 3 was to test whether the consistency principle underlies the effect of dialecticism on support for the AA policy. As expected, participants in the dialectical prime perceived that the AA policy entailed more consistent procedures ($M = 4.90, SD = 1.17$) than participants in the control prime ($M = 4.30, SD = 1.52$), $F(1, 89) = 6.30, p = .014$ ($\eta^2 = .07$). Further, there was significant indirect effect of a dialectical (vs. control) prime on attitudes (indirect effect $= .34, 95\% CI = .06, .79$) and behavioral intentions (indirect effect $= .22, 95\% CI = .02, .54$) through consistency perceptions. We also tested for differences in perceptions of distributive fairness between the two priming conditions. As expected, there were no differences in perceptions of distributive fairness between the dialectical prime condition ($M = 3.69, SD = 1.21$) and the control prime condition ($M = 3.88, SD = 1.35$), $F(1, 89) = .03, p = .866$ ($\eta^2 < .001$).

Discussion

Study 3 demonstrates that participants primed to think dialectically had more favorable attitudes and endorsed more behavioral intentions promoting an AA policy than participants in a control condition. Further, this effect of dialecticism on support for the AA policy was mediated by perceptions of procedural fairness—and perceptions of consistency in particular. That is, participants primed to think in a dialectical way (vs. control condition) perceived the AA policy as more procedurally fair and consistent, and in turn, supported the AA policy more.

Study 3 also provides guidance for organizations seeking to implement AA policies by showing that a relatively short intervention that primed dialectical thinking was successful in increasing support for the AA policy. However, this intervention may not be feasible for organizations to implement, as organizations may not be able to intervene prior to exposure to the AA policy. As such, in Study 4 we sought to constructively replicate our findings from Study 3 using a more practical dialectical prime embedded within the framing of the AA policy itself that organizations can use. In particular, we test whether invoking notions associated with dialecticism—such as constant change and inconsistencies in the environment—may increase perceptions of procedural fairness and consequent support for AA policies. We also test (as in Study 3) the effect of the dialectical prime on consistency perceptions and distributive fairness. Finally, given that the consistency measure consisted of a single item in Study 3, which raises concerns regarding its reliability, in Study 4 we added another item to our consistency measure to increase the construct reliability.

Study 4

Method

Participants and procedure. Participants were 177 business undergraduate students (69 women; average age = 20.46 years; average work experience: 2.73 years) at a Canadian university who received course credit for participation. A total of 206 participants completed the study, but we excluded 29 participants who did not correctly answer three comprehension questions (e.g., “Respond with ‘disagree’ for this item”; Meade & Craig, 2012). There were 89 participants who reported their ethnic background as Caucasian, 38 as East Asians, 32 as South Asians, four as Southeast Asian, two as African American, one as Hispanic, one as Middle Eastern, and three as mixed (seven unreported). In an online survey, participants were randomly exposed to either a weak preference AA policy that included a dialectical framing or to a weak preference AA policy that did not include a dialectical framing, but it included a rationale for its existence (see below). Following the AA policy, they completed the questionnaires described below.

Materials. The policy with the dialectical framing was a weak-preference AA policy modeled after the policy used in Study 2 (changed to a weak preference policy), with the addition of dialectical framing where the policy stated that the company operates in an environment that is constant flux that gives rise to inconsistencies and
contradictions. Thus, participants were primed to think of an environment that is constant flux, experiencing changes and inconsistencies, which is a key feature of dialecticism. The weak preference AA policy with no dialectical framing was the same as the policy described above minus the dialectical framing (see Appendix C for both policies).

Measures. We used the same measures as previously to assess procedural fairness (r = .86), attitudes (α = .90), behavioral intentions (α = .93), and distributive fairness (r = .42). To assess consistency perceptions we used the one item used previously and a new item. “The proposed policy would apply the same standards to all applicants” (r = .54). This additional item was adapted from Stanton’s (2000) measure of consistency. Table 6 presents descriptive statistics and correlations for all Study 4 variables.

Results

Dialectical framing, procedural fairness, and support for the AA policy. Using the same data analysis procedures as in Study 3, we found, as expected, that participants exposed to the AA policy with a dialectical framing had more favorable attitudes toward the AA policy (M = 4.43, SD = 1.34) than participants exposed to the comparison AA policy (M = 3.92, SD = 1.45), F(1, 174) = 6.98, p = .009 (ηp² = .04). There was also an effect of gender with women having more favorable attitudes (M = 4.61, SD = 1.21) than men (M = 3.91, SD = 1.47), F(1, 174) = 11.99, p = .001 (ηp² = .06). However, there were no differences in behavioral intentions between the two policies, F(1, 174) = 0.69, p = .407(ηp² = .004).

Participants exposed to the AA policy with a dialectical framing perceived the AA policy as more procedurally fair (M = 4.43, SD = 1.34) than participants exposed the comparison AA policy (M = 4.01, SD = 1.45), F(1, 174) = 3.87, p = .051 (ηp² = .02). There was also an effect of gender with women perceiving the AA policies as more procedurally fair (M = 4.54, SD = 1.33) than men (M = 4.04, SD = 1.42), F(1, 174) = 5.81, p = .017 (ηp² = .03).

We next tested our mediation predictions. A bootstrapping procedure showed a significant indirect effect of condition on attitudes (indirect effect = .32, 95% CI = [.003, .62]) through procedural fairness perceptions. Although we did not observe a main effect of condition on behavioral intentions, there was still a significant indirect effect through procedural fairness perceptions (indirect effect = .25, 95% CI = [.01, .50]). Thus, the AA policy with a dialectical framing (vs. a comparison AA policy with a rationale) enhanced the perceptions of procedural fairness, which in turn was related to more support for the AA policy.

Dialectical framing, consistency perceptions, and distributive fairness. Participants exposed to the AA policy with a dialectical framing perceived that the AA policy entailed more consistent procedures (M = 4.37, SD = 1.36) than participants in the comparison AA policy condition (M = 3.97, SD = 1.36), F(1, 174) = 4.09, p = .045 (ηp² = .02). As expected, there was also a significant indirect effect of condition on attitudes (indirect effect = .23, 95% CI = [.01, .49]) and behavioral intentions (indirect effect = .19, 95% CI = [.01, .40]) through consistency perceptions. Thus, the AA policy with a dialectical framing (vs. comparison AA policy) enhanced the perceptions that the AA policy was consistent, which in turn was related to more support for the AA policy.

We next tested whether perceptions of distributive fairness underlie the effect of dialecticism on support for the AA policy. Unexpectedly, participants exposed to the AA policy with a dialectical framing perceived the AA policy as more distributively fair (M = 4.22, SD = 1.21) than participants exposed the comparison AA policy (M = 3.78, SD = 1.22), F(1, 174) = 6.57, p = .011 (ηp² = .04). When testing a multiple mediator model with both procedural and distributive fairness as mediators, only procedural fairness mediated the effect of condition on behavioral intentions (indirect effect for procedural fairness = .23, 95% CI = [.02, .50]; distributive fairness: -.03, 95% CI = [.05, -.17]). However, both procedural and distributive fairness mediated the effect of condition on attitudes (indirect effect for procedural fairness = -.27, 95% CI = [.01, .58]; distributive fairness: .08, 95% CI = [.01, .23]).

Discussion

Study 4 provided additional evidence for the causal effects of dialecticism on reactions to AA policies by manipulating the way in which the AA policy is framed, that is, by introducing elements

10 Unlike the prime used in Study 3, the prime developed for this study has not been previously validated; thus, in a separate study with a sample of 93 undergraduate students we sought to demonstrate internal validity by employing a manipulation check to ensure our prime was affecting dialectical thinking styles. As expected, participants in the dialectical framing condition scored higher on the dialectical scale used in Study 1 and 2 (M = 3.89, SD = 0.45) than in the non dialectical framing condition (M = 3.68, SD = 0.51), t(91) = −2.03, p = .045.

11 As an important step in establishing the robustness of our effects (Nosek, Spies, & Motyl, 2012), we replicated our Study 4 findings in another sample of 135 undergraduate students. In line with our Study 4 results, we found that participants exposed to the AA policy with a dialectical framing (vs. no dialectical framing) had more favorable attitudes toward the AA policy, F(1, 132) = 9.33, p = .003 (ηp² = .07), endorsed more behavioral intentions to promote the AA policy, F(1, 132) = 5.75, p = .018 (ηp² = .04), and perceived the AA policy as more procedurally fair, F(1, 132) = 6.16, p = .014 (ηp² = .05). Further, procedural fairness mediated the effect of the AA policy with dialectical framing (vs. no dialectical framing) on attitudes (indirect effect = .41, 95% CI = [.09, .74]), and behavioral intentions (indirect effect = .29, 95% CI = [.09, .54]). In addition, in Study 4, we found that perceptions of consistency mediated the effect of the AA policy with dialectical framing (vs. no dialectical framing) on attitudes (indirect effect = .16, 95% CI = [.01, .41]), and behavioral intentions (indirect effect = .19, 95% CI = [.01, .83]). Finally, we also found that participants exposed to the AA policy with a dialectical framing (vs. no dialectical framing) perceived the AA policy as more distributively fair, F(1, 132) = 18.62, p < .001 (ηp² = .12), but distributive fairness did not mediate the effect of the AA policy on either attitudes (indirect effect = .07, 95% CI = [−.08, .27]) or behavioral intentions (indirect effect = .07, 95% CI = [−.15, .20]).

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations (Study 4)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
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<td>1.41</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td></td>
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<td>1.36</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.71*</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Procedural fairness</td>
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<td>1.40</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.80*</td>
<td>.65*</td>
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<td>Consistency</td>
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<td>1.37</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.58*</td>
<td>.47*</td>
<td>.60*</td>
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<td>1.23</td>
<td>.18*</td>
<td>.66*</td>
<td>.49*</td>
<td>.72*</td>
<td>.47*</td>
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<td>.49</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.16*</td>
</tr>
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Note. N = 177. Dialectical prime is coded as 0 = comparison affirmative action (AA) policy and 1 = AA policy with dialectical frame. Gender is coded as 0 = men and 1 = women. *p < .05.
of dialectical thinking in communication. In particular, participants who read a dialectically framed AA policy, compared to those who read a nondialectically framed AA policy, supported the AA policy more due to enhanced perceptions of procedural fairness. The results also provided additional evidence for the role of consistency in particular by showing that higher consistency perceptions in the AA policy underlie greater support for the dialectically framed AA policy. The findings of Study 4 also offer a more practical manipulation of dialectical thinking for organizations that can easily be adapted when communicating AA policies to employees, stakeholders, and the wider public.

One manner in which our Study 4 results differed from Study 3, however, was that both procedural and distributive fairness perceptions were affected by, and mediated the attitudinal effects of, our dialectically framed AA policy. This is in contrast to our results in Study 3 where our dialectical thinking prime did not affect perceptions of distributive fairness. It is puzzling that our dialectical thinking prime in Study 4 affects distributive fairness perceptions at all given participants did not know the outcomes associated with the AA policy, but one potential explanation for this finding could be that participants inferred that given that hiring procedures are inconsistent (i.e., the AA policy gives preferential treatment to women), outcomes may also be inconsistent for applicants. That is, participants in the nondialectically framed AA policy could have anticipated that based on the unfair procedures, future outcomes may also be unfair, and hence reacted less positively to the AA policy compared to those exposed to the dialectically framed AA policy. This suggestion that current procedural fairness perceptions could have influenced perceptions of anticipated outcomes (distributive fairness) is in line with the literature on anticipatory (in)justice, which suggests that expectations of one type of justice may influence expectations of other types of justice (Goldman, Shapiro, & Pearsall, 2016; Rodell & Colquitt, 2009; Shapiro & Kirkman, 2001).

However, although this may clarify why distributive fairness was affected in Study 4, it does not explain why such an effect was not obtained in Study 3, nor why distributive fairness did not influence outcomes other than attitudes toward the AA policy in Study 4. Given these inconsistent findings regarding distributive fairness, more research may be needed to outline boundary conditions on when and why distributive fairness plays a role in reactions to AA policies; however, we should also note that despite the varying role distributive fairness plays across Study 3 and 4, a consistent finding is that our hypotheses regarding procedural fairness are supported even when including distributive fairness in our models.

General Discussion

Despite their lack of popularity, research shows that AA policies are more effective than other (more popular) initiatives such as diversity training in increasing the employment of women and racial minorities (Kalev et al., 2006). Nevertheless, recent bans on AA policies threaten one of the most effective ways of increasing diversity—which is particularly an issue given women and minority men hold only 26.7% of board seats at Fortune 500 companies (Catalyst, 2013), and women’s representation on Fortune 500 boards is stagnating rather than increasing (Catalyst, 2012). Our approach to addressing the lack of support for AA policies has been to deal directly with this contradiction via promotion of dialectical thinking. Across four studies, using both weak and strong preference AA policies and a variety of indices of fairness and support, our results consistently show that higher dialectical thinking leads individuals to view AA policies more favorably. In doing so, our work makes a number of contributions to AA literature, as well as to the broader literatures on dialectical thinking and reactions to inconsistencies.

Contributions to the AA Literature

By surfacing the latent focus on consistency that characterizes both fairness-based explanations for reactions to AA policies and dialectical cognitive styles, our study allows an integration of these literatures. In so doing, we find support for a novel and theoretically appropriate factor that influences reactions to AA policies. Moreover, we also document the mediating mechanism underlying the effect of dialecticism: perceptions of procedural fairness, and in particular perceptions of consistency. To the extent that fairness paradigms represent the most dominant perspective on reactions to AA policies, our work represents a major contribution to this paradigm in that we outline that sometimes, AA policies can actually be perceived as fair (at least, fair in relation to identity-blind policies), especially weak preference AA policies.

From a broader perspective, however, our work—and Study 4 in particular—argues for a more fundamental shift in AA research. To date, a large body of research on reactions to AA policies has focused on variations in the type of policy—for example, how people react to weak versus strong preference policies (Harrison et al., 2006) or how people misperceive AA policies as being strong preference policies even though such policies are outlawed (Unzueta et al., 2008). After decades of research, we believe the findings are clear: by and large, people do not like AA policies because preferential treatment is viewed as being inconsistent with expectations of fair treatment, and while alterations in policy type may mitigate some of these negative reactions even weak preference policies are ultimately viewed unfavorably compared to identity-blind policies (Hideg & Ferris, 2014). As any AA policy that abandons giving special consideration and preferences to disadvantaged groups loses its main purpose, this problem will apply to all AA policy types, and continue to plague AA policies indefinitely.

Consequently, our work argues that the AA literature should pay less attention to AA policy type and more attention to AA policy framing. Our work began with the observation that AA policies are likely to be interpreted differently, depending on dialectical thinking styles; having established this in our first three studies, we next sought to show how AA policies can be subtly framed to foster a dialectical thinking style (and accordingly improve reactions to AA policies). We believe focusing on the framing of AA policies represents a more fruitful direction for the AA literature to take, because the element of inconsistent treatment is part and parcel of AA policies, regardless of policy type. We suggest researchers acknowledge this fact, and focus instead on how to craft AA policies that can mitigate its effects. A focus on framing effects can be fruitfully merged with other streams of AA research, such as the need to develop subtle ways to justify AA policies. For example, past research shows that more straightforward attempts to persuade individuals—such as presenting a clear case for the need for
preferential treatment based on past disadvantages for beneficiaries—actually leads to a backlash against and less support for AA policies (Kidder et al., 2004). By focusing on more subtle framing effects—such as the dialectical framing used in Study 4—this form of backlash can ideally be avoided.

**Contributions to the Literatures on Dialecticism and Inconsistencies**

Aside from our contributions to the AA literature, our research also contributes to the dialecticism literature by showing dialecticism influences perceptions of other objects. To date, dialecticism research has shown dialectical thinking impacts conceptions of the self (e.g., English & Chen, 2007), emotional experiences (e.g., Bagozzi, Wong, & Yi, 1999), and psychological well-being (e.g., Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2004). However, the effects of dialectical thinking on people’s inferences about other objects—such as the procedural fairness of an AA policy—are relatively unexplored (see Ma-Kellams et al., 2011, for an exception). Our research shows dialecticism shapes one’s perceptions of procedural fairness entailed in AA policies and support for such policies. In so doing, our work also extends research on dialectical thinking to the organizational domain by illustrating its role in influencing organizational phenomena.

A more fundamental contribution of our work lies in its implications for the concept of inconsistencies in organizational research. Our work demonstrates how higher dialectical thinkers are better able to handle inconsistencies in their environment, focusing particularly on the principle of consistent treatment and procedural fairness. However, in addition to the fairness literature, the assumption that individuals do not tolerate inconsistency is pervasive in the organizational (and, indeed, much of the Western academic) literature. For example, attribution theory posits that individuals use consistency as a cue to whether or not an individual is personally responsible for their behavior (see, e.g., Liden & Mitchell, 1985); self-verification theory posits that individuals behave in accordance with their self-perceptions because acting in an inconsistent manner would threaten their sense of coherence and predictability (see, e.g., Ferris, Lian, Brown, & Morrison, 2015); system justification theory argues that employees in stigmatized jobs will disidentify with their occupations to act consistent with social perceptions (Kreiner, Ashforth, & Sluss, 2006); finally, the notion that inconsistency motivates individuals to act in such a way as to eliminate inconsistency is the foundation of cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957).

As illustrated above, the notion that inconsistency is intolerable is ubiquitous; it is also, as our work demonstrates, incorrect—at least for dialectical thinkers. The contributions (and future research directions) of a dialectical thinking perspective for the aforementioned theories are numerous: It is possible that higher dialectical thinkers may not perceive their behavior and self-perceptions as being contradictory (and hence not be motivated to self-verify or to reduce dissonance); it is possible that higher dialectical thinkers may be quite happy to identify with stigmatized jobs because they see no contradiction in doing so; and it is possible that attribution theory postulates are simply less relevant for dialectical thinkers. By illustrating the limitations associated with current theoretical perspective on inconsistencies, our work has implications that extend far beyond the AA and fairness literatures alone.

Finally, our work speaks to recent research which has called into the question whether the effects of justice, predominantly studied in North America, would generalize to other cultures (Shao, Rupp, Skarlicki, & Jones, 2013; Shao & Skarlicki, 2014). For example, Shao et al.’s (2013) work showed that fairness effects on workplace outcomes (e.g., work satisfaction, job performance) were stronger for national samples associated with individualism, femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and low power distance, and these tend to be characteristics of Western cultures. As Eastern cultures are more likely to adopt dialectical thinking styles compared to Western cultures (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2012), we would also suggest that cultural differences in dialectical thinking merit investigating.

**Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions**

We provide converging evidence that dialecticism mitigates negative reactions to AA policies across four different studies, using two different methods to capture dialecticism (measuring it as an individual difference and priming it), in two different types of samples (student job applicant samples and an employee sample), and across policies in two countries (Canada and the U.S.A.). Taken as a whole, our studies constructively replicate each other and attest to the validity and generalizability of our findings. Yet despite these strengths, our research also has limitations that should be noted. First, in our methods we used only gender-based AA policies, while AA policies can also protect other traditionally disadvantaged groups such as racial minorities. Thus, whether our results would replicate to AA policies for racial minorities is an open question. With that said, we would expect a similar pattern of findings for race-based AA policies because the theoretical logic of our proposals is not dependent on males versus females (or African Americans vs. Caucasians, or minorities vs. majorities). That is, what all such AA policies have in common is that they involve inconsistencies in hiring between applicants from different groups. Consequently, there does not seem to be any theoretical rationale for expecting differences depending on the beneficiary of a given policy (e.g., males vs. females or Caucasians vs. African Americans).

We should note that across all of our studies (and in particular in Study 2) we observed a fairly high correlation between procedural fairness and attitudes toward the policy; however, this high correlation may be expected given attitudes toward the policy are likely largely driven by the procedural fairness of the policy. Moreover, although the high correlations may give rise to concerns regarding multicollinearity, this would only be a concern if we had both procedural fairness and attitudes as predictors of an outcome, which is not the case for our studies. Nevertheless, we conducted confirmatory factor analyses which showed that procedural fairness and attitudes are different constructs. It should also be noted that correlations between one specific dimension of procedural fairness, consistency, and attitudes are not that high, providing additional evidence that procedural fairness is a separate construct from attitudes.

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12 Please contact the first author for more details on these analyses.
Another limitation lies in our use of undergraduate students in Study 1, 3, and 4, which may invoke questions of external validity. Yet we should note that Mitchell (2012) found a strong correlation of .89 between the effect sizes observed in lab and field data for organizational research; more specific to AA research, Harrison et al. (2006) did not find any systematic differences between field studies with employees and laboratory studies with students in their meta-analysis on reactions to AA policies, concluding that there is little reason to be concerned about effects and results obtained from laboratory studies. In addition, we also attempted to mitigate this concern by embedding our research in the context of co-op hiring where we were able to test reactions of real job applicants to a proposed AA policy that would influence their own hiring prospects. This real-life setting, coupled with our results from an employee sample in Study 2 which largely replicated our findings from Study 1, may mitigate concerns about external validity. Indeed, as noted above, a strength of our studies is the replication of our results across studies affording varying levels of internal and external validity.

With that being said, as a reviewer noted, one potential limitation of the co-op hiring context is that our co-op student participants may have limited choices in terms of avoiding the AA policy, in that co-op students typically need to go through university-designed co-op hiring system to obtain co-op jobs; in a non-co-op employment context, applicants who dislike an AA policy may avoid the policy by going to a different company, a freedom that is circumscribed for co-op students. Although this does represent a limitation, we would also note that some freedom to avoid the co-op system is typically available to co-op students, as co-op students are free to find jobs outside of the co-op system (with the caveat that it is more difficult, and any job must be approved by the university’s co-op department).

An additional limitation is that given dialectical thinking is an individual difference, it remains an open question of how malleable dialectical thinking is. Past research suggests that cognitive styles can be trained and that the effects of such training may last at least two months (Neck & Manz, 1996), suggesting that the effects of interventions that raise levels of particular cognitive styles may have lasting effects. This past work as well as past research that specifically primes dialectical thinking (e.g., Cheng, 2009; Ma-Kellams et al., 2011; Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2004) attests to the notion that dialectical thinking should be—at least to some degree—malleable. Finally, in our research we also primed dialectical thinking in two different ways (in Study 3 and 4), and those primes led to an increase in perceptions of procedural fairness and consequent support for AA policies, providing additional evidence that dialectical thinking is malleable, at least in the short term. However, future research should examine how malleable dialectical thinking is over longer time periods and how long the effects of priming may last.

With respect to future directions, our work hints at possible cultural differences in support for AA policies. Although we assessed dialectical thinking as an individual difference variable within one country, Canada (Study 1) and the United States (Study 2), and primed it within one country, Canada (Study 3 and 4), past research suggests that East Asian cultures foster higher levels of dialectical thinking than North American and Western cultures (Spencer-Rodgers, Srivastava, et al., 2010; Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2012). As such, it could be that East Asians in general may be more likely to support AA policies than North Americans. Supporting this notion, some past research shows that Japanese students were more supportive of gender-based AA policies than American students (Ozawa, Crosby, & Crosby, 1996). Thus, our work suggests that a future research agenda should include a more comprehensive and integrative investigation of potential cultural differences in reactions to diversity promotion policies. Another important future direction would be to expand the breadth of our dependent variables. Namely, future research could examine more typical behavioral intentions in selection context such as intentions to apply for a job or accept a job offer.¹³

Finally, our studies were situated in the context of a policy proposal (i.e., an AA policy is being proposed and students, who will be affected by the policy, are consulted for their opinions) where the outcomes of selection (i.e., distributive fairness) are not yet known. It would be interesting to examine whether the effects we outline in our paper would hold, even in the presence of applicants receiving negative outcomes (i.e., an applicant not getting a job and attributing that outcome to the AA policy).

Practical Implications

Our research offers important practical implications by suggesting that a more dialectical way of thinking enhances support for AA policies. We view this as being useful for decision-makers in at least two ways. The first deals with rehabilitating the general way in which such policies are viewed. In particular, our research indicates that AA policies (especially weak preference AA policies) are not always viewed negatively. This is important because there may be an assumption that AA policies will invoke a backlash (especially among nonbeneficiaries), which may lead organizations to be reluctant to publicize or promote their use of AA policies for fear of applicant reactions. Knowing that not all employees may react negatively to AA policies may encourage decision-makers to be more confident in communicating and endorsing the use of such policies. Of course, our results also show that lower dialectical thinkers do react negatively to such policies, and decision-makers should be aware of this. However, we provide evidence in Study 3 and 4 that it is possible to induce individuals to think in a more dialectical way and, in turn, to increase support for AA policies. Although the type of manipulation we used in Study 3 may not be feasible for the workplace, the manipulation used in Study 4 is, pointing to a practical way for organizations to enhance support for AA policies.

Finally, our work suggests a way for communicating AA policies in a way that increases perceptions of procedural fairness and consequent support for such policies. Namely, past research’s recommendations suggest that one of the best ways to increase perceived fairness and consequent support for AA policies is to clearly communicate the structural features of the policy with a premise and recommendation that the policy does not involve any preference (Harrison et al., 2006). However, AA policies tend to involve a form of special consideration and preferential treatment. Our research’s practical implications thus build on past research’s

¹³ We thank a reviewer for this suggestion.
recommendations by suggesting that structural features should be clearly communicated, but communication itself should also involve aspects of dialecticism to enhance support for preferential AA policies.

References


Hui, C. M., Fok, H. K., & Bond, M. H. (2009). Who feels more ambiva-
Hinrichs, P. (2012). The effects of affirmative action bans on college
Hui, C. M., Fok, H. K., & Bond, M. H. (2009). Who feels more ambiva-


Appendix A

Materials for Study 1

**Weak Preference Affirmative Action Policy for Women**

The Statistics Canada, 2011 census showed that while women make up more than half of the total Canadian workforce, they tend to be concentrated in occupations of lower status and pay. The largest percentage of women is currently employed in sales and service jobs and only a small percentage is working in management, professional, or supervisory positions. This uneven distribution of females across certain positions can be mostly attributed to past discrimination against women in employment systems.

To address these inequalities, many organizations in Canada implement employment equity (EE) policies. EE policies refer to the elimination of unfair practices that prevent the entry, promotion, or retention of women in the workplace.

[University] is also committed to the principles of employment equity and implements an EE policy for women when hiring faculty members and staff. However, there is no EE policy for women in place for co-op hiring and this may present an important area for an expansion of this policy at [university]. Research involving [university] students estimates that the hiring rate of female students for certain, more desirable co-op jobs is 35% and the hiring rate for males is 65%. Given that [university] consists of approximately 55% female students and 45% male students, the proportion of female students hired for certain jobs does not reflect the proportion of female students.

To address this imbalance, a new EE policy for women is proposed to be implemented for student hiring in [university] Co-op programs. This proposed EE policy suggests the target hiring rate for female students to be 55%, an increase of 20%. This would mean that the hiring rate for women would increase for co-op positions in which they are currently underrepresented. This EE policy would involve hiring female students over male students only if they had equal qualifications.

**Identity-Blind Diversity Policy**

The Statistics Canada, 2011 census showed that while women make up more than half of the total Canadian workforce, they tend to be concentrated in occupations of lower status and pay. The largest percentage of women is currently employed in sales and service jobs and only a small percentage is working in management, professional, or supervisory positions. This uneven distribution of females across certain positions can be mostly attributed to past discrimination against women in employment systems.

To address these inequalities, many organizations in Canada emphasize valuing and promoting diversity and implement diversity policies that promote the entry, promotion or retention of employees with diverse backgrounds. One commonly implemented diversity policy is an identity-blind diversity policy, which gives equal chances and opportunities to succeed to all employees regardless of their backgrounds.

[University] is also committed to the principles of diversity and implements an identity-blind diversity policy when hiring faculty members and staff. Under an identity-blind policy, applications are encouraged from candidates with diverse backgrounds. All demographic and other identifying information is removed from applications to ensure no bias against any gender or ethnicity. As such, the most qualified individuals are hired. However, there is no such diversity policy in place for co-op hiring and this may present an important area for an expansion of this policy at [university].

To address this, [university] is proposing to implement a new identity-blind diversity policy for student hiring in [university] co-op programs. This proposed policy would promote diversity by encouraging students with different backgrounds to apply for positions, and students’ demographics would not influence hiring and only qualifications would matter. As such, the proposed policy would afford an equal chance to succeed to all students.

(Appendices continue)
Appendix B
Materials for Study 2

Strong Preference Affirmative Action Policy for Women

INDSCO, a leader in the engineering consulting industry, is proposing to implement a new Affirmative Action (AA) policy to increase the hiring of women. AA policies for women refer to the elimination of unfair practices that prevent the entry, promotion, or retention of women in the workplace.

The Human Resources Management department at INDSCO has determined that their hiring rate is 35% women and 65% men. According to the assessment of available workforce in the region, there are approximately 55% women and 45% men who would be eligible for employment at INDSCO. Thus, the proportion of women they hire does not reflect the proportion of women available.

To address this imbalance, a new AA policy for women is proposed to be implemented for hiring at INDSCO. This proposed AA policy suggests the target hiring rate for women to be 55%, an increase of 20%. This would mean that the hiring rate for women would increase for positions in which they are currently underrepresented.

This AA policy would involve hiring women over men when they have the minimum qualifications for the position. That is, a minimum qualification level for each position will be set and the most qualified applicant above this level will receive the position unless there is a female candidate that satisfies the minimum qualification requirements. In this case, a female applicant is selected before a potentially better qualified male applicant.

Identity-Blind Diversity Policy

INDSCO, a leader in the engineering consulting industry, is proposing to implement a new identity-blind diversity policy for their hiring. Under an identity-blind policy, candidates from diverse backgrounds are encouraged to apply but all demographic and other identifying information is removed from applications to ensure no bias against any gender or ethnicity.

Many organizations in the United States emphasize valuing and promoting diversity and implement diversity policies that promote the entry, promotion or retention of employees with diverse backgrounds. One commonly implemented diversity policy is an identity-blind diversity policy, which gives equal chances and opportunities to succeed to all employees regardless of their backgrounds.

INDSCO is also committed to the principles of diversity and equality and thus is planning to implement an identity-blind diversity policy. This proposed policy would promote diversity by encouraging applicants with different backgrounds to apply for positions, and applicants’ demographics would not influence hiring and only qualifications would matter. As such the proposed policy would afford an equal chance to succeed to all prospective applicants.

(Appendices continue)
Appendix C  
Materials for Study 4

Weak Preference Affirmative Action Policy for Women With Dialectical Framing

At INDSCO, we are leaders in the engineering consulting industry. We operate in a business environment that is in constant flux that gives rise to inconsistencies and contradictions but which always has one constant: change. Reflecting this, our work practices and policies are similarly evolving and adapting to the changing environment we are functioning in.

In line with this, we are proposing to implement a new Affirmative Action (AA) policy to increase the hiring of women. AA policies for women refer to the elimination of unfair practices that prevent the entry, promotion, or retention of women in the workplace.

The Human Resources Management department at INDSCO has determined that our hiring rate is 35% women and 65% men. According to the assessment of available workforce in the region, there are approximately 55% women and 45% men who would be eligible for employment at INDSCO. Thus, the proportion of women we hire does not reflect the proportion of women available.

To address this imbalance, a new AA policy for women is proposed to be implemented for hiring at INDSCO. This proposed AA policy suggests the target hiring rate for women to be 55%, an increase of 20%. This would mean that the hiring rate for women would increase for positions in which they are currently underrepresented.

This AA policy would involve hiring women over men only if they had equal qualifications. Thus, qualifications would be considered first, and gender second.

Weak Preference Affirmative Action Policy for Women With No Dialectical Framing

At INDSCO, we are leaders in the engineering consulting industry. We operate in a business environment where there is an underrepresentation of women in certain positions. This uneven distribution of females across certain positions can be mostly attributed to past discrimination against women.

To address these inequalities, we are proposing to implement a new Employment Equity (EE) policy to increase the hiring of women. EE policies for women refer to the elimination of unfair practices that prevent the entry, promotion, or retention of women in the workplace.

The Human Resources Management department at INDSCO has determined that our hiring rate is 35% women and 65% men. According to the assessment of available workforce in the region, there are approximately 55% women and 45% men who would be eligible for employment at INDSCO. Thus, the proportion of women we hire does not reflect the proportion of women available.

To address this imbalance, a new EE policy for women is proposed to be implemented for hiring at INDSCO. This proposed EE policy suggests the target hiring rate for women to be 55%, an increase of 20%. This would mean that the hiring rate for women would increase for positions in which they are currently underrepresented.

This EE policy would involve hiring women over men only if they had equal qualifications. Thus, qualifications would be considered first, and gender second.