The Presence of Diversity Initiatives Leads to Increased Pro-White Hiring Decisions Among Conservatives

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Despite the push and pull between pro-diversity advocates and conservative resistance, most organizations have implemented diversity initiatives in an effort to promote equitable and fair organizational practices. Past work has shown that these diversity initiatives may not be as effective as expected and may instead result in unintended negative consequences for the very individuals they are meant to support. In three novel experiments (total $N = 3,664$), we investigated whether and when the presence of pro-diversity messages in organizational job recruitment materials might facilitate versus hinder the hiring of underrepresented racial minorities. Participant race and political ideology were also investigated as predictors of hiring recommendations. Findings indicate that pro-diversity messages facilitate politically motivated hiring bias. Specifically, in the presence of pro-diversity messages, White and some Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) conservatives tend to display a pro-White shift in their hiring recommendations, whereas liberals tend to display a pro-minority shift. The present research underscores the importance of organizational awareness regarding the potential for hiring managers to react, whether consciously or subconsciously, against pro-diversity efforts because of political ideology. The present research also highlights the need for organizations to move beyond just espousing pro-diversity values and actually investigate the impact diversity initiatives have on hiring, retention, and promotion of diverse employees.

Public Significance Statement
The present research integrated theory from social, political, and industrial/organizational psychology to investigate the impact of pro-diversity messages on hiring decisions in the workplace. Findings revealed that the presence of diversity cues elicit politically motivated decision making, leading White and some BIPOC conservatives to make more pro-White hiring recommendations and leading liberals to make more pro-Black hiring recommendations. The findings highlight how diversity cues can ironically promote—rather than curtail—inequality, particularly among conservatives. The present research suggests that organizations should consider different approaches depending on the political climate and ideology of their managers, such as preventing demographic information from being disclosed during the hiring process or adding diversity-related metrics to performance evaluations.

Keywords: diversity initiatives, political ideology, hiring decisions, race, discrimination

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Despite substantial investments in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in U.S. workplaces, bias in employment decisions persists (Bartels et al., 2013; Kalev et al., 2006; Quillian et al., 2017). This persistence can be explained in several ways: the failures of prejudice reduction interventions (Paluck et al., 2021), DEI training "preaching to the choir" rather than changing the minds of the most prejudiced (Noon, 2018), decoupling between what organizations say they will do and the actual resources they commit to DEI (see Leslie, 2019), and general resistance to or backlash toward DEI policy itself (Dobbin et al., 2015). However, no work has experimentally assessed whether pro-diversity signals themselves might impact employment decisions. In the present investigation, we assess whether the presence

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(vs. absence) of diversity cues impacts how White and Black job candidates are evaluated. In particular, due to the politicization of pro-diversity efforts in the United States, we investigate whether diversity cues differentially impact the employment decisions of conservatives versus liberals.

Biases in Employment Decisions Exist and Persist Despite Substantial DEI Investments

Foundational work in economics, sociology, industrial/organizational psychology, and social psychology has documented disparities in employment decisions based on factors such as race and gender. An impressive literature has also identified the ways in which bias enters employment decisions, helping to explain these disparities (Baert, 2018; Colarelli et al., 2010; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Koch et al., 2015; Liebkind et al., 2016; Triana et al., 2015). With increasing understanding of how bias impacts employment decisions, organizations have invested in antibias training and other initiatives aimed at reducing discrimination in the workplace. Yet despite these large and increasingly ubiquitous investments, employment disparities have persisted over the decades (Kalev et al., 2006; Quillian et al., 2017), even in an era when all Fortune 100 organizations have implemented some sort of DEI initiative (Colvin, 2022). Researchers have put forward several explanations for this persistence, including an overreliance on antibias training initiatives, which have limited efficacy on meaningfully reducing prejudice (Lai et al., 2014; Noon, 2018; Paluck et al., 2021); a "window dressing" approach to DEI, in which diversity is touted as an important priority despite a lack of meaningful policy change or accountability (Marques, 2010); and the possibility that such policies reduce perceptions of managerial autonomy, which may drive resentment and even disobedience (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018).

We theorize that beyond these explanations, the mere presence of organizational pro-diversity messages may function as a signal that some individuals react against (see Dover et al., 2020). This backlash hypothesis is supported by experimental work demonstrating that the mere presence of pro-diversity cues in recruitment materials can lead to psychological, physiological, and behavioral consequences that may have negative impacts on the careers and well-being of minority employees (Dover et al., 2020; see more in the following section). No work has yet identified direct consequences for minority job applicants, however.

Backlash Against Pro-Diversity Signals May Promote Pro-White Behavior

A growing literature demonstrates that individuals are quite sensitive to the presence and type of pro-diversity messaging espoused by organizations. Experimental work suggests that among overrepresented groups, the mere presence (vs. absence) of pro-diversity values in an organization's recruitment materials can lead to greater perceptions of anti-White and antimale bias (Dover et al., 2016; Kaiser et al., 2022), greater concerns about experiencing discrimination (Dover et al., 2016), more legitimization of antiminority and antiwomen discrimination (Brady et al., 2015; Dover et al., 2014; Kaiser et al., 2013), and even a physiological threat response during an interview simulation (Dover et al., 2016). The way in which organizations communicate pro-diversity values can also have an impact: Members of overrepresented groups appear

to be more threatened by messages promoting multiculturalism than messages promoting colorblindness (Plaut et al., 2011) and respond with prejudice and conservatism when reminded that diversity is increasing (vs. staying constant; Craig & Richeson, 2014a; Craig & Richeson, 2014b).

This work suggests that for members of overrepresented groups, diversity cues may sometimes prompt backlash against diversity-enhancing efforts. Backlash in the form of heightened prejudice, heightened concerns about discrimination against the ingroup, and underestimation of discrimination against minority groups clearly has implications for the careers and well-being of underrepresented groups. What remains untested, however, is whether there are direct impacts of this backlash on the career prospects of underrepresented groups. In the present work, we assess this possibility by experimentally manipulating the presence (vs. absence) of diversity cues in organizational recruitment materials and measuring hiring recommendations for White and Black job candidates. In general, we expect that backlash to diversity cues may manifest as a shifting of hiring recommendations in favor of White (vs. equivalently qualified Black) job candidates. This present investigation also seeks to assess *who* is most likely to exhibit this backlash, looking particularly at the role of political ideology (liberal vs. conservative participants; Studies 1–3) and group status (White vs. Black, Indigenous, and people of color [BIPOC] participants; Studies 2–3).

Political Ideology May Moderate Reactivity to Diversity Cues

The diversification of public and private institutions has long been, and continues to be, a politically divisive issue in the United States. In many ways, the public discourse and policy around diversification can be characterized as a battle between egalitarian advocates pushing for enhanced diversity versus reactive critics aiming to maintain the status quo. At the national political level, this can be exemplified by the history of competing executive orders regarding affirmative action and other diversity efforts: The 1965 executive order requiring federal contractors to use affirmative action in hiring decisions (*Executive Order No. 11246*, 1965) was implemented by a progressive democrat, weakened by a conservative George W. Bush in 2002 (*Executive Order No. 13279*, 2002), then strengthened again by the progressive Barak Obama (*Executive Order No. 13672*, 2014). Following the mass racial justice protest movement in 2020, Donald Trump's conservative administration issued an executive order banning diversity training (*Executive Order No. 13950*, 2020), an order that was subsequently revoked on Day 1 of Joe Biden's liberal-leaning administration (*Executive Order No. 13985*, 2021).

Though diversification efforts have been criticized on both the left and right (Gilens et al., 1998), reactivity against pro-diversity policy and sentiment has historically been most voraciously advocated by conservatives (Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). The Trump-led Republican Party's vocal anti-diversity initiative rhetoric in recent years, coupled with U.S. conservatism's emphasis on maintaining the status quo and consolidating power in the hands of those traditionally advantaged, has not only contributed to the polarization around this issue but likely its salience as well (*Executive Order No. 13950*, 2020). It is unclear, however, how politics might directly influence or interact with diversity cues to influence hiring recommendations.

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Political ideology is a complex and multifaceted construct, consisting of operational (i.e., ideological beliefs) and symbolic (i.e., ideological self-identification/affective attachments to the source of policy) ideologies, and is not synonymous with party affiliation (Crowson et al., 2005; Ellis & Stimson, 2009; Jost et al., 2009; Popp & Rudolph, 2011). Conservative ideologies are not inherently antiminority or antidiversity, yet as Nosek et al. (2007, p. 35) noted, "a consistent expectation is that, compared to liberals, conservatives are less concerned with equality, prefer to maintain the status quo, favour dominant groups over subordinate groups, and favour ingroups to a greater extent over outgroups." While this suggests that conservatives may be more pro-White than liberals at baseline, we are primarily interested in whether conservatives are more likely to exhibit backlash to diversity cues, given that conservatism's key features are ingroup favoritism and a resistance to status quo change, and not diversity in and of itself (Duckitt et al., 2002; Feldman, 2013; Jost et al., 2003). Given conservative antidiversity and antiminority/immigrant rhetoric, especially in the context of the American workforce, we expected that individuals who self-identified with political conservatism would display more backlash to diversity cues in the form of pro-White hiring recommendations.

Group Status May Moderate Reactivity to Diversity Cues

Research on backlash to diversity cues has largely focused on members of overrepresented groups, as they are theorized to be the most likely to be threatened by pro-diversity efforts, and they also still hold a disproportionate amount of influence in U.S. organizations. A smaller literature, however, has investigated the impact of diversity cues on members of underrepresented groups. This work has revealed mixed results: Generally, underrepresented groups appear to be less threatened by (and more attracted to) pro-diversity and multicultural messages (Dover et al., 2021; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008; Scarborough et al., 2019; Wolsko et al., 2006). They are also less likely than overrepresented groups to believe that DEI initiatives result in "reverse discrimination" (Dover et al., 2016, 2021; Kaiser et al., 2022) and feel more positive toward diversity initiatives generally (Scarborough et al., 2019). However, some racial minorities and women show similar legitimizing effects as White participants and men when gauging the merits of discrimination claims made by ingroup members. Specifically, women high in benevolent sexism and ethnic minority respondents high in system justifying beliefs seem just as likely as men and White respondents to doubt that discrimination has occurred in an organization with pro-diversity (vs. neutral) values (Brady et al., 2015; Dover et al., 2014). This suggests that while there may be less of a threat-based backlash toward pro-diversity cues among underrepresented (vs. overrepresented) groups, there may still be an assumption among some underrepresented group members that DEI initiatives create a playing field that is less weighted toward overrepresented groups (Kaiser et al., 2013).

In the present investigation, our primary hypotheses regard members of overrepresented groups, as there is more literature and theory supporting the expectation that overrepresented groups may exhibit backlash to diversity cues. However, we will also explore moderation by group status (in particular, participant race/ethnicity) in Studies 2 and 3. In general, we expect that backlash to diversity cues will be more pronounced among White (overrepresented) participants than among BIPOC (underrepresented) participants. We do not have strong predictions about whether political ideology may

be a more potent moderator for White versus BIPOC participants, but do note that the most outspoken public disparagement toward DEI efforts has come from White conservatives.

The Present Research

The present set of studies is the first to experimentally assess the impact of pro-diversity cues on hiring outcomes. In three novel experiments, we investigate whether hiring recommendations for diverse job candidates differ depending on whether participants are hiring for an organization that emphasizes (vs. does not emphasize) pro-diversity values. We also investigate whether political ideology (Studies 1–3) and participant race (Study 2: White vs. BIPOC; Study 3: White vs. Black, Latine, Asian; and Black vs. White, Latine, Asian) moderate the effects of diversity cues on hiring recommendations.

To assess hiring recommendations, we are presenting participants with two candidates—one White and one Black—with equivalent but not identical qualifications (counterbalanced). Participants will both rate the candidates on their suitability for the job and rank the candidates in order of preference. In addition, after participants submit their hiring recommendations, we manipulate whether the White or Black candidate is ultimately hired. We then assess perceptions of fairness of the hiring decision.

We anticipated that pro- or antiminority shifts in response to pro-diversity messages would be nuanced and would likely depend on individual characteristics of participants. While an exploratory approach was employed in Study 3 with regard to differences in reactivity to pro-diversity cues among White, Black, Latine, and Asian participants, the following patterns were expected to emerge in the presence of diversity cues across all three studies:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Conservatism will predict an antiminority shift in hiring decisions in response to pro-diversity messages, regardless of participant race.
>
> *Hypothesis 2:* In comparison to BIPOC participants, White participants will be more likely to display an antiminority shift in response to pro-diversity messages, regardless of political ideology.
>
> *Hypothesis 3:* In comparison to BIPOC conservatives, White conservatives will display a greater antiminority shift in response to pro-diversity messages.
>
> *Hypothesis 4:* Greater symbolic conservatism, as opposed to economic or social operational conservatism (Study 3), would correspond to an antiminority shift in response to pro-diversity messages.

Transparency and Openness

The current research meets the Transparency and Openness guidelines recommended by the journal. Study 1 was not preregistered; however, Study 2 and Study 3 were preregistered (Dover, 2022; Dover & Hachem, 2023). There were some additional outcomes and individual difference variables collected in Studies 1–3 that are not reported in the article but are available in the research materials (Dover & Hachem, 2024). All research materials, data, and analysis code are available at https://osf.io/dnwhx/?view_only=89ddc46940624523953940bcf8f08be9.

Study 1

Method

Design

Study 1 employed a between-subjects design among White participants with two experimental factors (Diversity Manipulation, Hiring Manipulation) and an individual difference moderator (Political Orientation). Because one of the experimental factors—Hiring Manipulation—was introduced part-way through the procedure, the focal design was a 2 (Diversity Manipulation: Diversity Condition vs. Neutral Condition) × Continuous (Political Orientation) model. For the last dependent variable, the design was a 2 (Diversity Manipulation: Diversity Condition vs. Neutral Condition) × 2 (Hiring Manipulation: Black vs. White candidate hired) × Continuous (Political Orientation) model.

Power Analysis. A sensitivity power analysis revealed that with a sample size of 872, 80% power detects a very small effect size of $f^2 = .009$ for both the focal and secondary designs.

Participants

Of 1,193 participants recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (mTurk), 73% provided analyzable data: 188 did not complete any dependent variables, 86 failed attention checks, 39 identified as non-White, and seven participants asked that their data be removed. The final sample consisted of 872 White U.S.-residing participants ($M_{age} = 40.64$, 18–77, $SD = 13.15$), of whom 51% were assigned to the Diversity Condition, and 47% were informed that the Black candidate was hired. Over half of participants identified as women/female (53.6%), with one participant specifically identifying as transgender female; men/male (46.2%) made up slightly less than half the sample, with one participant specifically identifying as transgender male. A small number of participants identified as nonbinary or androgynous (.2%). A plurality of participants held a 4-year degree (39%), and 54% reported having managerial experience. Regarding political orientation ($M = 2.69$, 1–5, $SD = 1.22$), 49% of participants reported liberal leanings, 20% were moderate, and 31% were conservative.

Procedure

Prior to beginning the study, participants provided their demographic information as well as their political orientation (see https://osf.io/dnwhx/?view_only=89ddc46940624523953940bcf8f08be9 for complete set of demographics as well as measures that were excluded from the present analyses; Dover & Hachem, 2024).

Organizational Background and Introduction to Prospective Candidates. The study was presented as an investigation into how people make hiring decisions. Participants were told that they would assume the role of a manager at a technology company in Silicon Valley. As the manager, participants would receive background information about the company and view applicants for an open regional sales manager position at the company. Participants would then provide hiring recommendations as if they were a hiring manager for the company.

Diversity Manipulation. When learning about the organization, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: (1) In the *Diversity Condition*, participants viewed materials from an organization with a company culture emphasizing collaboration and teamwork among a talented and diverse workforce; (2) in the *Neutral Condition*, participants viewed materials from an organization with a company culture emphasizing collaboration and teamwork among a talented and unique workforce. These materials were presented alongside information about an open regional sales manager position and were based on the stimuli used in Dover et al. (2016).

Prospective Candidates. After viewing the background information about the organization, participants were presented, successively at random, with four prospective candidates to evaluate. Developed with extensive pretesting, each candidate had a name (which was used to signal race/ethnicity and gender) and a qualification profile with four pieces of information: education level, years of experience, resume rating, and screening interview rating. The two focal candidates were designed to have matched qualification profiles with the same education level and years of experience but a higher resume rating on one and a higher screening interview rating on the other. The name attached to each matched qualification profile was counterbalanced: One of the matched candidates was designed to be perceived as a White man (Connor D.), and the other was designed to be perceived as a Black man (Darnell B.). The hiring recommendations of these two candidates were the focal interest of the present study.

In addition to the two matched candidates, two nonfocal candidates were included. One candidate had the least impressive qualification profile and was designed to be perceived as a White man (Gavin G.). The other candidate had the most impressive qualification profile and was designed to be perceived as a Latina (Mariajose H.). This candidate was included for three reasons: (1) She served as a "distractor" candidate to obfuscate our focal interest in the White and Black matched candidates; (2) she served as a "credentialing" candidate, such that participants with high external motives to appear nonprejudiced could endorse a Latina candidate in an attempt to demonstrate pro-diversity values and thus evaluate the matched candidates with fewer self-presentational concerns (Monin & Miller, 2001); and (3) she served as an attention check, such that participants who did not rank her more favorably than the least qualified candidate were excluded from analyses.

Hiring Recommendations. Participants were asked to rate each candidate upon viewing their qualification profile. After seeing all four candidates, participants were given the opportunity to revise their ratings of the candidates; however, since the change in both the White, $F(1, 870) = .004$, $p = .952$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$, and Black candidates' ratings, $F(1, 870) = .38$, $p = .536$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$, did not differ significantly by Diversity Manipulation, analyses were conducted using only the initial ratings of the focal candidates.

Next, after seeing all four candidates, participants were asked to rank the candidates from most-to-least favorable. See the "Measures: Prior to the Hiring Manipulation" section for more details.

Hiring Manipulation. After making their hiring recommendations, participants learned that the organization offered the position to the highly qualified Latina candidate but that she declined the offer. The position was then offered to a second candidate, who accepted the offer from the organization. Participants were randomly assigned to learn that either the White or Black matched candidate was hired and were asked to indicate how fair they believed this decision to be. See the "Measure: After the Hiring Manipulation" section for more details.

Measures: Prior to the Hiring Manipulation

Candidate Ratings. After reviewing each candidate's profile, participants rated each candidate with two items: "How qualified is [candidate] for the job?" and "How positive do you feel about hiring [candidate]?" Participants responded to these items on a 0 (*not at all*) to 100 (*extremely*) slider scale. Ratings for the White and Black matched candidates demonstrated good reliability (αs = .88 and .89, respectively).

Candidate Ranking. After rating the prospective candidates individually, participants were asked to rank them in relation to each other. Participants were instructed that their "first choice should be at the top as #1" and their "last choice should be at the bottom as #4." A binary variable was computed to indicate whether the White matched candidate (0) or the Black matched candidate (1) was ranked more favorably.

Measure: After the Hiring Manipulation

Hiring Fairness. After the Hiring Manipulation in which participants learned that either the White matched candidate or the Black matched candidate was chosen for hire, participants' perceptions of hiring fairness were assessed with two items: "I think the decision to hire [candidate] was fair" and "I understand why they made the offer to [candidate]" (α = .89). Participants responded to these items on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) Likert scale.

Manipulation Check

Perceptions of the importance of diversity within the organization were assessed with one item: "How important do you think valuing diversity is to the company?" Participants responded to this item on a 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*extremely important*) Likert scale.

Analysis Plan

For the manipulation check, as well as dependent variables assessed before the Hiring Manipulation, effects of the Diversity Manipulation were assessed first using analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and logistic regression in SPSS. For the dependent variable assessed after the Hiring Manipulation, the additional factor was added to the models. To explore the moderating role of political orientation, we conducted simultaneous moderated regressions for continuous dependent variables and simultaneous moderated logistic regressions for binary dependent variables. Marginal and significant interactions were followed up with simple slope analyses. Moderation analyses were conducted in Mplus.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Consistent with the intent of the Diversity Manipulation, participants believed the organization valued diversity to a greater extent in the Diversity Condition (*M* = 4.21, *SD* = .94) than in the Neutral Condition (*M* = 3.78, *SD* = .95), $F(1, 870) = 45.71$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .050$. The effects of the Diversity Manipulation were present even after controlling for the Hiring Manipulation.

Outcomes Prior to the Hiring Manipulation

See Table 1 for means of the continuous outcome and percentage breakdowns of the binary outcome.

Candidate Ratings. A mixed factorial ANOVA indicated a main effect of Candidate Race, such that the Black candidate was rated significantly more favorably than the White candidate, $F(1, 870) = 20.01$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .022$. This did not differ significantly depending on the Diversity Manipulation, $F(1, 870) = .60$, $p = .438$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$.

To assess the moderating role of political orientation, a difference score of the candidates' ratings was computed to simplify analyses. With this difference score, higher scores indicate more favorability toward the Black (vs. White) candidate. A moderated regression on the candidate rating difference score indicated a marginally significant Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction, $B = -1.10$, $\beta = -.06$, $SE = .62$, $p = .077$, 95% CI [−2.32, .12] (see Figure 1). Follow-up analyses revealed that in the Diversity Condition, there was an effect of political orientation, such that higher conservatism was associated with greater favorability toward the White candidate, $B = -1.45$, $\beta = -.07$, $SE = .48$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [−2.39, −.51]. In the Neutral Condition, there was no effect of political orientation ($p = .374$).

Candidate Ranking. A logistic regression revealed that the Diversity Manipulation did not significantly influence candidate ranking, $\chi^2(1) = .04$, $p = .840$, $B = -.03$, $SE = .14$, $OR = .973$, 95% CI [.75, 1.27], Nagelkerke pseudo-$R^2 = 0.00$.

However, a moderated regression analysis revealed a significant Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction, $B = -.24$, $SE = .11$, $OR = .790$, $p = .039$, 95% CI [−.46, −.01] (see Figure 2). Follow-up analyses revealed an effect of political orientation in the Diversity Condition, such that a standard deviation increase in conservatism predicted a 39% increased likelihood of ranking the

Table 1

Study 1 Means and Percentages of Outcomes Prior to the Hiring Manipulation

			Diversity manipulation			
			Neutral condition		Diversity condition	
	M (SD)/%		*M (SD)/%*		*M (SD)/%*	
Outcome	Black candidate	White candidate	Black candidate	White candidate	Black candidate	White candidate
Candidate ratings	**80.41 (10.66)**	**78.78 (11.06)**	80.09 (10.29)	78.74 (11.11)	80.72 (11.01)	78.82 (11.03)
Candidate ranking	56.0%	44.0%	56.3%	43.7%	55.6%	44.4%

Note. Bolded values indicate a main effect of Candidate Race.

Figure 1

Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation Interaction for Differences in Candidate Ratings
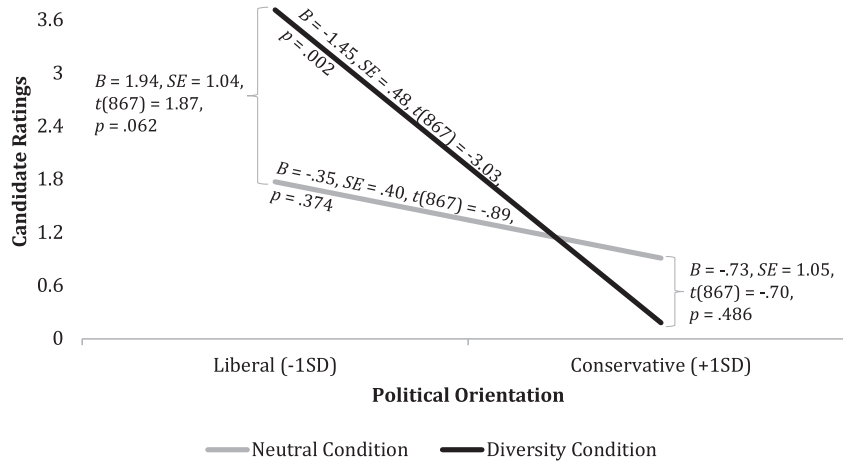
Note. Higher ratings indicate pro-Black favorability. *SE* = standard error.

White candidate over the Black candidate, $B = -.33$, $SE = .08$, $OR = .717$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.50, −.17]. This effect of political orientation was not present in the Neutral Condition ($p = .211$).

Outcome After the Hiring Manipulation

See Table 2 for means of perceived fairness of the hiring decision.

Perceptions of Fairness in Hiring Decision. A between-subjects ANOVA revealed a main effect of the Hiring Manipulation, $F(1, 868) = 29.45$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .033$, such that participants who were informed of the Black (vs. White) candidate's hiring reported greater perceptions of fairness. There was no main effect of the Diversity Manipulation, $F(1, 868) = .31$, $p = .577$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$, nor was

there a significant Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation interaction, $F(1, 868) = .30$, $p = .587$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$.

A moderated regression analysis exploring political orientation as a continuous moderator indicated a marginally significant two-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction, $B = .14$, $ß = .06$, $SE = .08$, $p = .058$, 95% CI [−.01, .29], and a significant two-way Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction, $B = −.28$, $ß = −.12$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.43, −.13]. These were qualified by a significant three-way Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction, $B = −.34$, $ß = −.08$, $SE = .15$, $p = .027$, 95% CI [−.64, −.04] (see Figure 3).

Follow-up analyses explored conditional effects in both hiring conditions. A conditional main effect of political orientation was

Figure 2

Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation Interaction for Differences in Candidate Ranking
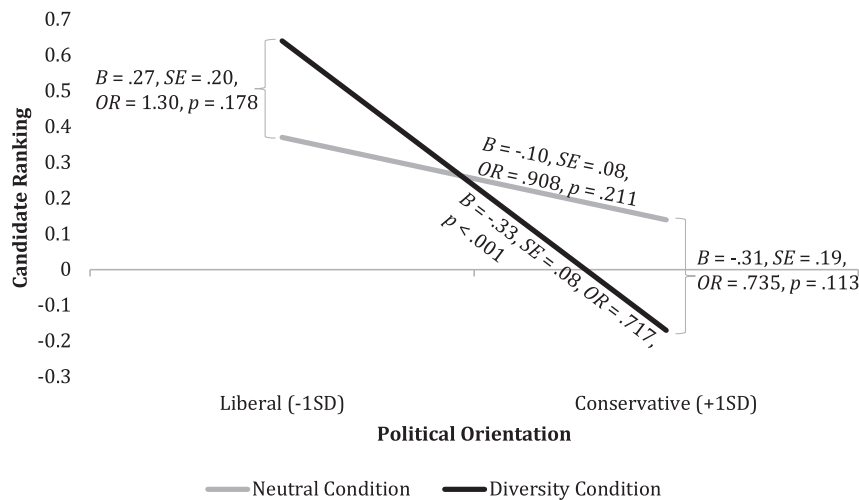
Note. Higher values indicate that the Black candidate was ranked higher. *OR* = odds ratio; *SE* = standard error.

Table 2

Study 1 Means of Perceived Fairness of Hiring Decision

		Diversity manipulation	
		Neutral condition	Diversity condition
Hiring condition	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Black candidate hired	**5.84 (1.30)**	5.84 (1.27)	5.84 (1.33)
White candidate hired	**5.34 (1.39)**	5.40 (1.30)	5.29 (1.47)

Note. Bolded values indicate a main effect of the Hiring Manipulation.

found when the White candidate was hired, with higher levels of conservatism associated with greater perceived fairness of the decision to hire the White candidate, $B = .13$, $ß = .05$, $SE = .05$, $p = .016$, 95% CI [.02, .23]. This conditional main effect was qualified by a significant conditional two-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction, which was present only among participants who were informed of the White candidate's hiring, $B = .30$, $ß = .11$, $SE = .11$, $p = .004$, 95% CI [.10, .51]. Among those who learned that the White candidate was hired, political orientation did not predict perceived fairness of the White candidate's hiring in the Neutral Condition ($p = .701$), but conservatism was associated with higher perceived fairness of the White candidate's hiring in the Diversity Condition, $B = .28$, $ß = .10$, $SE = .08$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.12, .43].

While a significant conditional two-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction was not found when the Black candidate was hired, a conditional main effect of political orientation was found, suggesting that regardless of the Diversity Manipulation, higher levels of conservatism were associated with a lower perceived fairness of the decision to hire the Black candidate, $B = -.15$, $ß = -.06$, $SE = .06$, $p = .006$, 95% CI [−.26, −.04]. Further analyses of the three-way interaction indicated that among participants who learned that the Black candidate was hired, conservatism was associated with significantly higher perceptions of fairness in the Diversity Condition, $B = -.17$, $ß = -.06$, $SE = .09$, $p = .046$, 95% CI [−.34, −.003], and

marginally lower perceptions in the Neutral Condition, $B = -.14$, $ß = -.05$, $SE = .07$, $p = .055$, 95% CI [−.27, .003].

Discussion

Findings from Study 1 indicate that for White individuals making hiring recommendations, political ideology interacts with the presence of diversity cues to differentially influence preferences for White and Black job candidates. In the presence of diversity cues, conservatism was associated with a pro-White shift in hiring recommendations. Specifically, in the Diversity Condition, participants who reported higher levels of conservatism were more likely to rate the White (vs. Black) candidate more favorably and rank the White candidate over the Black candidate. Furthermore, when diversity cues were present, conservatism was associated with a higher perceived fairness of the organization's decision to hire the White candidate. The impact of conservatism on hiring bias was not present in the Neutral Condition, suggesting that White conservatives were not generally more pro-White in their decisions, but that pro-White bias emerged when there are indications that an organization is attempting to facilitate diversity and inclusion. These findings align with previous work that has found White individuals to endorse race-related issues as a zero-sum game and to misperceive equality-promoting language or initiatives as harmful to their own personal or their group's success (Brown et al., 2022; Norton & Sommers, 2011).

Findings from Study 1 also indicated that, regardless of the Diversity Manipulation, conservatism was associated with lower perceptions of fairness after learning of the Black candidate's hiring but higher perceptions of fairness after learning of the White candidate's hiring. This finding underscores well-established expectations of conservatives preferring to maintain the status quo as opposed to increasing equality, as well as displaying greater preference toward the dominant group as well as one's ingroup, which, in the case of White conservatives, happen to be one in the same (Harrison et al., 2006; Nosek et al., 2007).

Figure 3

Three-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation for Perceptions of Fairness of Hiring Decision
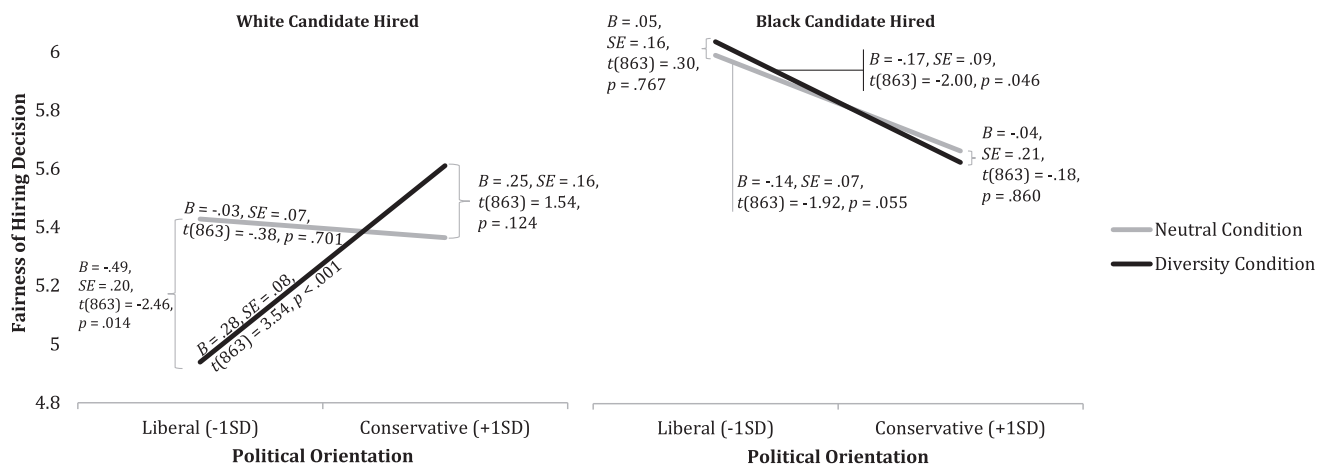
Note. Higher values indicate perceptions of greater fairness. *SE* = standard error.

Overall, Study 1 provides evidence that among White individuals making hiring recommendations, diversity cues can elicit politically motivated hiring decisions. At baseline (in the Neutral Condition), conservatives are not more likely than liberals to favor a White candidate. But in the presence of pro-diversity cues (the Diversity Condition), conservatism becomes positively associated with a pro-White hiring bias. For White liberals, diversity cues appear to strengthen a pro-Black hiring tendency, at least with these self-report measures of hiring preferences. Several questions, however, remain unanswered. To further explore the moderating effect of political ideology on hiring recommendations in the presence of diversity cues, a second study was conducted. In the second study, we introduced Participant Race as an additional moderating factor in order to assess whether White conservatism or conservatism more generally facilitates the politically motivated hiring decisions seen in Study 1.

Study 2

Method

Design

Study 2's design was almost identical to Study 1, with the addition of Participant Race as a two-level between-subjects factor. Specifically, Participant Race was coded depending on whether the participant identified as solely White (White participants) or any combination of Black or African American, Latino or Hispanic, Asian or Asian American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and/or "other" (BIPOC participants). Participants who identified as both White and another race/ethnicity were coded as BIPOC.

Power Analyses. Sensitivity power analyses revealed that with a sample size of 880, 80% power detects a very small effect size of $f^2 = .009$ for both the three- and four-way interactions.

Participants

Of the 1,209 participants recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (mTurk), 75% provided analyzable data: 180 did not complete any dependent variables, 111 failed attention checks, and 17 asked that their data be removed. This left a sample of 901 participants. Participants were asked to report their race/ethnicity and to indicate whether they considered themselves to be a person of color. Participants who indicated being solely White but also identified as a person of color ($n = 16$) were also excluded from the analyses, along with participants who identified as "other" and as a person of color ($n = 3$) because we could not confirm their racial/ethnic identity. The final sample consisted of 882 U.S.-residing participants[1] ($M_{age} = 40.41$, 18–83, $SD = 13.05$), of whom 51% were assigned to the Diversity Condition, and 50% were informed that the Black candidate was hired. Participants were asked to report their sex/gender and identified as women/female (56%); men/male (43%); or indicated a label not listed (1%), of which participants identified as nonbinary ($n = 3$), nonbinary trans ($n = 1$), and trans male ($n = 2$). Remaining participants were classified as either White only ($n = 623$) or BIPOC ($n = 259$).

White Participants. Among White participants ($M_{age} = 42.06$, 18–83, $SD = 13.41$), 52% were assigned to the Diversity Condition, and 49% were informed that the Black candidate was hired. A plurality of White participants held a 4-year degree (39%), and 55% reported having managerial experience. Regarding political orientation ($M = 2.81$, 1–5, $SD = 1.27$), 46% of White participants reported liberal leanings, 19% were moderate, and 35% were conservative.

BIPOC Participants. Among BIPOC participants ($M_{age} = 36.41$, 18–71, $SD = 11.16$), 48% were assigned to the Diversity Condition, and 52% were informed that the Black candidate was hired. BIPOC participants identified as Black or African American (86), Latino or Hispanic (64), Asian or Asian American (82), American Indian or Alaska Native (12), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (4), and 11 identified as "other." A plurality of BIPOC participants held a 4-year degree (48%), and 52% reported having managerial experience. Over half of BIPOC participants ($M = 2.67$, 1–5, $SD = 1.14$) reported liberal leanings (52%), 20% were moderate, and 28% were conservative.

Procedure and Measures

Study 2 procedures and measures were identical to study procedures used during Study 1, except that Study 2 was preregistered to the Open Science Framework, with study materials available at https://osf.io/4vbrx (Dover, 2022). There were also some additional outcomes, such as perceptions of competence and individual difference variables collected, that are not reported in the article but are available in the research materials (Dover & Hachem, 2024).

Analysis Plan

The analysis plan was identical to that of Study 1, with one exception. In all models, Participant Race (BIPOC = 0, White = 1) was added as an additional between-subjects factor.

Results

Manipulation Check

Consistent with the intent of the Diversity Manipulation and findings from Study 1, participants in the Diversity Condition ($M = 4.11$, $SD = .96$) believed the organization valued diversity to a greater extent than participants in the Neutral Condition ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.04$), $F(1, 878) = 31.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .035$. While BIPOC participants ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .96$) believed the company valued diversity marginally more than White participants ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.05$), $F(1, 878) = 3.01$, $p = .083$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, the Diversity Condition × Participant Race interaction was not significant, $F(1, 878) = .74$, $p = .390$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$.

Results did not differ after controlling for the Hiring Manipulation. Overall, results for the manipulation check mirrored findings from Study 1 for White participants.

Outcomes Prior to the Hiring Manipulation

See Table 3 for means of the continuous outcome and percentage breakdowns of the binary outcome.

Candidate Ratings. Similar to Study 1, a mixed factorial ANOVA indicated a main effect of Candidate Race, $F(1, 878) = 6.99$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$, such that the Black candidate was rated

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[1] Listwise deletion was used for regression analyses in MPLUS, resulting in a sample size of 880 participants due to missing data.

significantly more favorably than the White candidate. Candidate rating did not differ significantly by the Diversity Manipulation, $F(1, 878) = .23$, $p = .634$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$, nor was there a significant Candidate Race × Diversity Manipulation × Participant Race interaction, $F(1, 878) = 2.69$, $p = .101$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$.

As in Study 1, for analyses exploring the moderating role of political orientation, we computed a difference score of the candidates' ratings to simplify analyses. With this difference score, higher levels indicate more favorability toward the Black (vs. White) candidate. Results indicated a significant three-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race interaction, $B = -3.06$, $ß = -.08$, $SE = 1.45$, $p = .035$, 95% CI [−5.89, −.22] (see Figure 4). Mirroring Study 1, there was a significant conditional Diversity Condition × Political Orientation interaction among White participants, $B = -1.45$, $ß = -.07$, $SE = .70$, $p = .037$, 95% CI [−2.82, −.09].

The simple effects of political orientation among White participants were nonsignificant in both conditions, but they were in opposite directions: Conservatism was (nonsignificantly) associated with more pro-White ratings in the Diversity Condition but more pro-Black ratings in the Neutral Condition. We also found a significant effect of the Diversity Manipulation among White conservatives, such that White conservatives (+1SD) in the Diversity Condition reported greater favorability toward the White candidate than White conservatives in the Neutral Condition, $B = -2.68$, $ß = -.12$, $SE = 1.17$, $p = .022$, 95% CI [−4.97, −.38]. Among BIPOC participants, there were no conditional effects of the Diversity Manipulation, political orientation, or their interaction.

Candidate Rankings. A logistic regression indicated that the Diversity Manipulation did not significantly influence how the candidates were ranked, likelihood ratio $\chi^2(1) = .04$, $p = .833$, $B = .05$, $SE = .25$, $OR = 1.05$, 95% CI [.65, 1.72], Nagelkerke pseudo-$R^2 = .001$. This did not differ depending on Participant Race, $\chi^2(1) = .05$, $p = .826$, $B = -.07$, $SE = .30$, $OR = .937$, 95% CI [.52, 1.68], Nagelkerke pseudo-$R^2 = .001$.

The moderated regression revealed a significant three-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race interaction, $B = .51$, $SE = .26$, $p = .049$, $OR = 1.67$, 95% CI [.002, 1.03] (see Figure 5). Similar to Study 1, follow-up analyses among White participants revealed a nonsignificant conditional two-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction but a

significant conditional main effect of Political Orientation, such that regardless of the Diversity Manipulation, a standard deviation increase in conservatism predicted an 18% increased likelihood of White participants ranking the White candidate over the Black candidate, $B = -.17$, $SE = .06$, $OR = .845$, $p = .009$, 95% CI [−.29, −.04]. Though this conditional effect of political orientation did not depend significantly on the Diversity Manipulation for White participants, the simple effect of political orientation reached statistical significance in the Diversity Condition ($p = .038$) but not in the Neutral Condition ($p = .102$).

Among BIPOC participants, a significant conditional two-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction was found, $B = -.55$, $SE = .23$, $OR = .577$, $p = .015$, 95% CI [−1.00, −.11]. Follow-up analyses revealed that in the Diversity Condition, higher levels of conservatism were associated with a 53% increased likelihood of ranking the White candidate over the Black candidate, $B = -.43$, $SE = .17$, $OR = .653$, $p = .014$, 95% CI [−.77, −.09]. There was no effect of political orientation among BIPOC participants in the Neutral Condition ($p = .398$). As such, BIPOC participants in this study ranked the candidates in a pattern similar to White participants in Study 1.

Outcome After the Hiring Manipulation

See Table 4 for means of perceived fairness of the hiring decision.

Perceptions of Fairness in Hiring Decision. Mirroring Study 1, the between-subjects ANOVA indicated a main effect of the Hiring Manipulation, such that participants who were told the Black candidate was hired believed the decision was significantly fairer than those who were told the White candidate was hired, $F(1, 874) = 26.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .030$. There was also a main effect of the Diversity Manipulation, $F(1, 874) = 6.45$, $p = .011$, $\eta_p^2 = .007$, with participants in the Diversity Condition finding hiring decisions significantly less fair than participants in the Neutral Condition. The Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation interaction was nonsignificant, $F(1, 874) = .001$, $p = .969$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$, as was the Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Participant Race interaction, $F(1, 874) = .91$, $p = .340$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$.

To assess the moderating role of political orientation, we conducted a four-way Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race moderated regression. Results

Table 3

Study 2 Means and Percentages of Outcomes Prior to the Hiring Manipulation for Overall Sample and by Participant Race/Ethnicity

			Diversity manipulation			
			Neutral condition		Diversity condition	
	M (SD)/%		M (SD)/%		M (SD)/%	
Outcome	Black candidate	White candidate	Black candidate	White candidate	Black candidate	White candidate
Candidate ratings						
All participants	**80.11 (11.08)**	**78.95 (11.09)**	80.49 (10.91)	79.26 (10.87)	79.75 (11.24)	78.66 (11.30)
White participants	80.53 (10.96)	79.20 (10.58)	81.17 (10.66)	79.34 (10.86)	79.94 (11.21)	79.06 (10.34)
BIPOC participants	79.12 (11.32)	78.37 (12.22)	78.99 (11.33)	79.07 (10.93)	79.25 (11.36)	77.62 (13.47)
Ranking candidates						
All participants	54.5%	45.5%	54.4%	45.6%	54.7%	45.3%
White participants	55.5%	44.5%	55.7%	44.3%	55.4%	44.6%
BIPOC participants	52.1%	47.9%	51.5%	48.5%	52.8%	47.2%

Note. Bolded values indicate a main effect of Candidate Race. BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Figure 4

Three-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race for Differences in Candidate Ratings
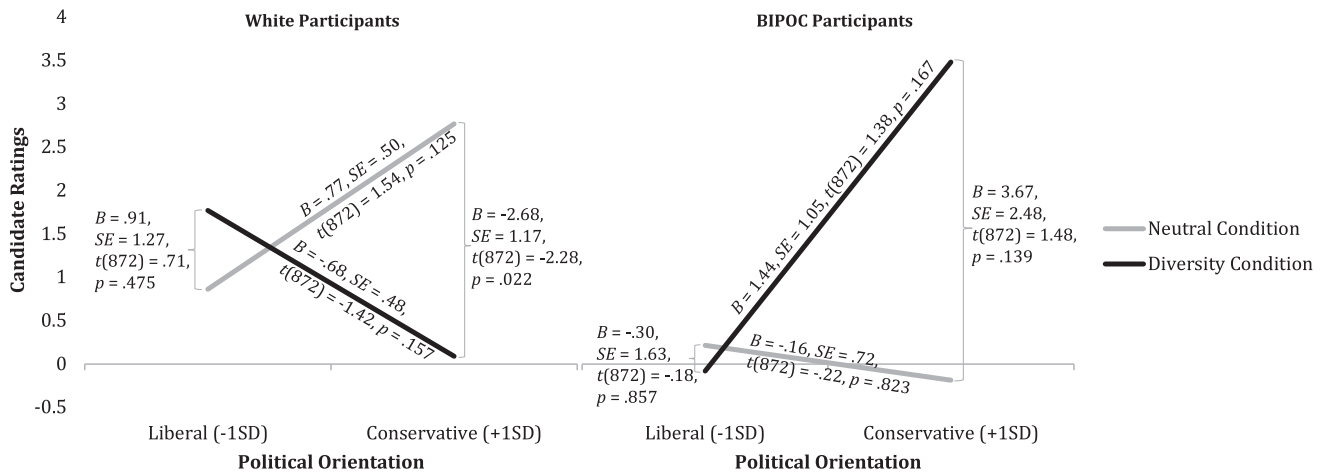
Note. Higher ratings indicate pro-Black favorability. *SE* = standard error; BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

indicated a significant two-way Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction, $B = -.26$, $ß = -.12$, $SE = .07$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [$-.40, -.11$] and a significant three-way Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction, $B = -.36$, $ß = -.08$, $SE = .15$, $p = .015$, 95% CI [$-.64, -.07$]. However, these were qualified by the focal and significant four-way Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race interaction, $B = .62$, $ß = .06$, $SE = .31$, $p = .042$, 95% CI [.02, 1.23] (see Figure 6).

Follow-up analyses for White participants mirrored Study 1, such that among White participants who learned that the White candidate was hired, higher conservatism was associated with higher perceptions of fairness in the Diversity Condition, $B = .25$, $ß = .09$, $SE = .10$, $p = .012$, 95% CI [.05, .44], but not in the Neutral Condition ($p = .150$). Results did not indicate an effect of political orientation among White

participants when the Black candidate was hired in either the Diversity ($p = .278$) or Neutral Condition ($p = .150$).

Among BIPOC participants who learned that the White candidate was hired, higher conservatism was associated with higher perceptions of fairness in the Diversity Condition, $B = .31$, $ß = .11$, $SE = .15$, $p = .042$, 95% CI [.01, .61], but not in the Neutral Condition ($p = .477$). Conversely, when the Black candidate was hired, higher conservatism was associated with lower perceptions of fairness in the Diversity Condition, $B = -.33$, $ß = -.12$, $SE = .11$, $p = .003$, 95% CI [$-.54, -.11$], but not in the Neutral Condition ($p = .492$).

Discussion

Study 2 expanded the scope of the research to understand effects of political ideology and pro-diversity cues on hiring recommendations

Figure 5

Three-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race for Differences in Candidate Rankings
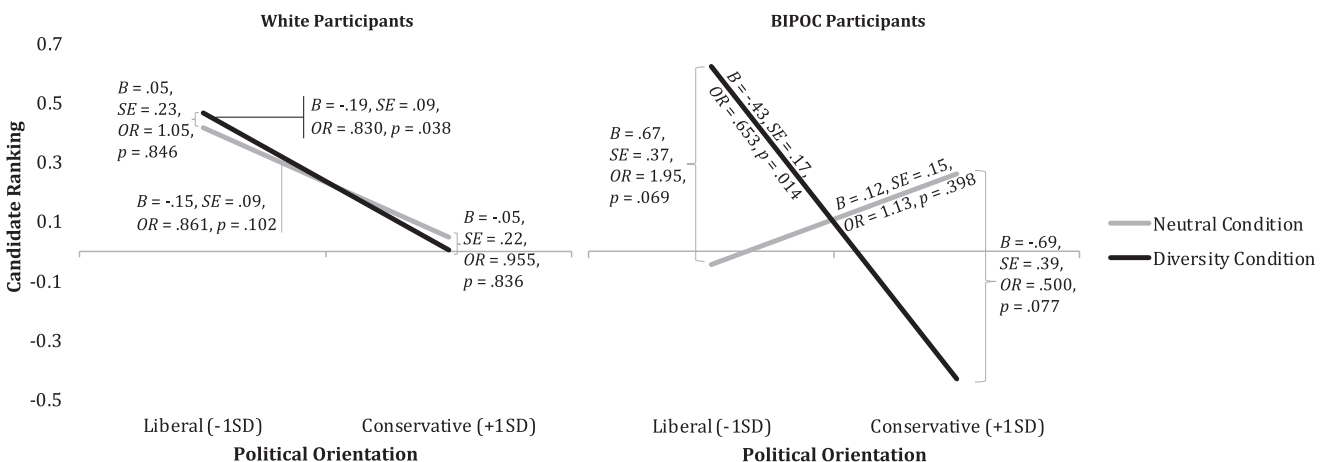
Note. Higher values indicate that the Black candidate was ranked higher than the White candidate. *OR* = odds ratio; *SE* = standard error; BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Table 4

Study 2 Means of Perceived Fairness of Hiring Decision for Overall Sample and by Participant Race/Ethnicity

| | | | Diversity manipulation | | | |
| | | | Neutral condition | | Diversity condition | |
| | *M (SD)* | | *M (SD)* | | *M (SD)* | |
Study 2 participants	Black candidate	White candidate	Black candidate	White candidate	Black candidate	White candidate
All participants	*5.77 (1.26)*	*5.24 (1.45)*	**5.87 (1.17)**	**5.38 (1.34)**	**5.68 (1.33)**	**5.10 (1.54)**
White participants	5.79 (1.30)	5.23 (1.50)	5.84 (1.24)	5.39 (1.38)	5.74 (1.36)	5.09 (1.58)
BIPOC participants	5.73 (1.16)	5.26 (1.31)	5.94 (1.02)	5.36 (1.25)	5.54 (1.24)	5.14 (1.39)

Note. Italic values indicate a main effect of the Hiring Manipulation. Bolded values indicate a main effect of the Diversity Manipulation. BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

among both White and BIPOC participants. Findings among White participants were similar, though not identical, to Study 1: Among White participants, higher levels of conservatism were largely associated with more pro-White outcomes in the Diversity Condition but less so in the Neutral Condition. However, compared to Study 1 findings, the impact of political orientation was seemingly more universally associated with pro-White outcomes across the two

conditions. In other words, there were more unmoderated effects of political orientation for White participants in Study 2 compared to Study 1. This may have to do with the political climate in which Study 2 data were collected. Specifically, Study 1 was conducted before April 2020, whereas Study 2 was conducted in the aftermath of the April 2020 murder of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter uprising, when political messaging about race and Black

Figure 6

Four-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race for Perceptions of Fairness in Hiring Decision
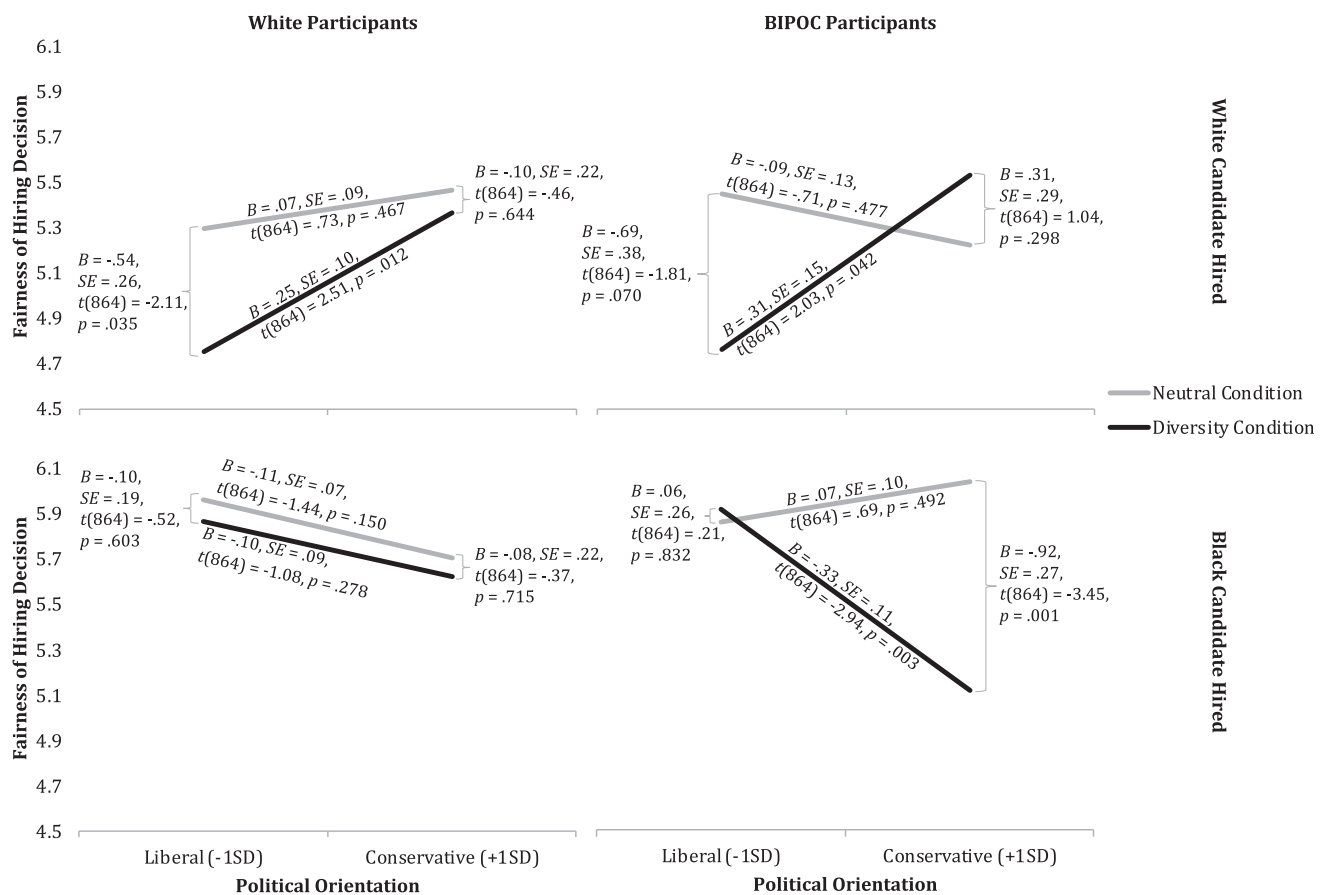
Note. Higher values indicate perceptions of greater fairness. *SE* = standard error; BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

progress was particularly potent. As such, political ideology may have been a more impactful predictor of hiring decisions at baseline.

For BIPOC participants, a less consistent pattern emerged: The link between conservatism and pro-White outcomes among BIPOC participants was sometimes stronger and sometimes weaker than the effects found for White participants. For example, among BIPOC participants in the Diversity Condition, conservatism was (nonsignificantly) associated with less favorability toward the White candidate but significantly *more* likelihood of hiring the White candidate. In other words, the impact of conservatism on outcomes among BIPOC participants looked similar to White participants for some outcome variables but was in the opposite direction for others. From Study 2, it is clear that diversity cues can make hiring decisions more politically polarized for both White and BIPOC participants. However, there was still ambiguity about the extent to which political ideology differentially impacts responses to diversity cues depending on ethnicity/race. For this reason, additional research was needed to isolate when and for whom diversity cues impact hiring decisions.

To do this, we conducted a third study in which we account for more nuance in the conceptualization of participant race and participant political ideology. In Study 3, rather than grouping participants as either White or BIPOC, we intentionally recruited a more balanced sample that allowed us to distinguish between four major ethnic/racial groups in the United States: White, Latine, Asian, and Black. By investigating differences between specific ethnic/racial groups, we hoped to parse apart whether the disparate patterns we saw among BIPOC participants in Study 2 may be due to group differences in how BIPOC populations respond to diversity cues. Though we did not have specific hypotheses regarding differences between the various ethnic/racial groups, we were interested in whether Black participants may be particularly unlikely to exhibit polarized hiring decisions in response to diversity cues given the unique role of anti-Blackness in American culture and the specific comparisons we are making between White and Black job candidates (Abascal, 2023; Higginbotham et al., 2023; Krupnikov & Piston, 2016).

We also explored additional conceptualizations of political ideology in order to isolate whether the polarized hiring decisions seen in Studies 1 and 2 are due more to symbolic, identity-based political motives or to more operational, policy-based political motives. Research has found that operational and symbolic ideologies differentially impact policy support (Camobreco, 2016; Ellis, 2012), with one's symbolic ideology likely outweighing their operational ideology in the evaluation process (Popp & Rudolph, 2011). Although Americans tend to lean toward a liberal social operational ideology or hold liberal beliefs about social policy (e.g., abortion, separation of church and state), they tend to lean toward a conservative economic operational ideology or hold conservative beliefs about economic policy (e.g., business regulations, welfare benefits) as well as identify more readily with a conservative symbolic ideology (Ellis & Stimson, 2009, 2012; Everett, 2013; Feldman, 2013; Zell & Bernstein, 2014) because of the media's role in the socialization of conservative norms and economic values (Kellstedt, 2000).

Compared to liberals, conservatives tend to report a stronger ideological social identity (i.e., symbolic ideology; Devine, 2015). In addition, the accessibility and centrality of one's symbolic conservative political ideology may also increase in highly polarized ideological climates where the political rhetoric revolves around threats to the status quo, as is currently the case in the United States (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Banaji & Heiphetz, 2010; Devine, 2015;

Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Increased accessibility and centrality of one's symbolic conservative political ideology may, in turn, increase the influence of ideological ingroup cues and norms on individual attitudes and reactivity against pro-diversity cues (Devine, 2015; Malka & Lelkes, 2010; Popp & Rudolph, 2011).

To explore whether there is a differential impact on reactivity to pro-diversity cues, economic operational ideology, social operational ideology, and symbolic ideology were measured in Study 3, in addition to the traditional liberal–conservative self-identification measure.

Study 3

Method

Design

Study 3's design was almost identical to Study 2, except extraneous outcome variables were removed and relevant moderating variables (i.e., operational political ideology and symbolic political ideology) were added. Furthermore, BIPOC participants were not grouped together under one category. Instead, participants who identified as only White, Black or African American, Latino or Hispanic, or Asian or Asian American were coded into four separate groups.

Power Analyses. Sensitivity power analyses revealed that with a sample size of 1890, 80% power detects a very small effect size of $f^2 = .004$ for both the three- and four-way interactions.

Participants

Of the 2,292 participants recruited via Prolific, 82% provided analyzable data: 195 did not complete any dependent variables, 42 failed attention checks, 52 failed to correctly identify the assumed race of either the White and/or the Black candidate, and 15 asked that their data be removed. This left a sample of 1988 participants. Participants who identified as Arab, Middle Eastern, or North African ($n = 20$); American Indian or Alaska Native ($n = 47$); Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ($n = 8$); "other" ($n = 16$), or who preferred not to share their racial/ethnic identity ($n = 7$) were also excluded from the analyses due to a lack of power because of small sample sizes.

The final sample consisted of 1890 U.S.-residing participants ($M_{age} = 39.93$, 18–85, $SD = 14.55$), of whom 51% were assigned to the Diversity Condition and 50% were informed that the Black candidate was hired. Participants identified as women/female (48%), men/male (51%), or nonbinary (1%). Participants identified as White ($n = 1,112$), Black ($n = 283$), Latine ($n = 251$), or Asian ($n = 244$).

White Participants. Among White participants ($M_{age} = 44.43$, 19–85, $SD = 14.67$), 52% were assigned to the Diversity Condition, and 52% were informed that the Black candidate was hired. About 37% of White participants held a 4-year degree, and 59% reported having managerial experience. Regarding political orientation ($M = 2.75$, 1–5, $SD = 1.25$), 46% of White participants reported liberal leanings, 23% were moderate, and 31% were conservative.

Using the other measures of conservatism, White participants were, on average, symbolically liberal ($M = .44$, $SD = .28$ on a 0–1 scale), economically moderate ($M = 50.07$, $SD = 20.03$ on a 0–100 scale), and socially liberal ($M = 45.37$, $SD = 20.82$ on a 0–100 scale).

Black Participants. Among Black participants (M_{age} = 36.78, 18–78, SD = 12.59), 53% were assigned to the Diversity Condition, and 47% were informed that the Black candidate was hired. About 32% of Black participants held a 4-year degree, and 48% reported having managerial experience. Over half of Black participants reported liberal leanings (54%), 29% were moderate, and 17% were conservative (M = 2.51, 1–5, SD = 1.09).

Using the other measures of conservatism, Black participants were, on average, symbolically liberal (M = .38, SD = .24), economically liberal (M = 41.93, SD = 12.14), and socially liberal (M = 43.41, SD = 16.52).

Latine Participants. Among Latine participants (M_{age} = 32.16, 18–69, SD = 11.31), 48% were assigned to the Diversity Condition, and 44% were informed that the Black candidate was hired. About 34% of Latine participants held a 4-year degree, and 45% reported having managerial experience. A large portion of Latine participants reported liberal leanings (49%), 26% were moderate, and 25% were conservative (M = 2.64, 1–5, SD = 1.19).

Using the other measures of conservatism, Latine participants were, on average, symbolically liberal (M = .41, SD = .25), economically liberal (M = 45.56, SD = 18.09), and socially liberal (M = 40.14, SD = 20.02).

Asian Participants. Among Asian participants (M_{age} = 31.04, 18–64, SD = 10.04), 50% were assigned to the Diversity Condition, and 53% were informed that the Black candidate was hired. About 46% of Asian participants held a 4-year degree, and 39% reported having managerial experience. Over half of Asian participants reported liberal leanings (57%), 28% were moderate, and 15% were conservative (M = 2.44, 1–5, SD = .99).

Using the other measures of conservatism, Asian participants were, on average, more symbolically liberal (M = .37, SD = .22), economically liberal (M = 43.44, SD = 15.18), and socially liberal (M = 36.98, SD = 16.38).

Procedure and Measures

Study 3 was preregistered to the Open Science Framework, and study materials were made available at https://osf.io/ctzks (Dover & Hachem, 2023).

Study 3 procedures were identical to study procedures used during Study 2; however, several changes were made to the included measures (see Study 3 materials available at https://osf.io/dnwhx/?view_only=89ddc46940624523953940bcf8f08be9 for complete set measures that were excluded from the present analyses; Dover & Hachem, 2024).

Symbolic Political Ideology. Symbolic political ideology was assessed using two items adapted from the Liberal–Conservative (Symbolic) Ideology Measure (Rabinowitz et al., 2009). The first item is the traditional liberal–conservative self-identification item on a 1 (*very liberal*) to 5 (*very conservative*) Likert scale, and the second item is a difference score that is computed from a 100-point feeling thermometer (0 = extreme coldness/negativity to 100 = extreme warmth/positivity) of "liberals" and "conservatives." Both the self-identification and difference score items were normalized on a 0 to 1 scale, and their combined average was computed to create a composite symbolic political ideology variable. Higher values denote greater symbolic conservatism (α = .91).

Economic Operational Political Ideology. Economic operational political ideology was assessed using an adapted version of the economic conservatism subscale of the 12-item Social and Economic Conservatism Scale (Everett, 2013). Participants were asked to indicate the extent of their positivity or negativity toward eight economically related issues (e.g., "limited government," "gun ownership," "affirmative action") on a 100-point feeling thermometer (0 = extreme coldness/negativity to 100 = extreme warmth/positivity; 50 indicated neutrality toward an issue). Higher values indicate greater economic conservatism (α = .83).

Social Operational Political Ideology. Social operational political ideology was assessed using an adapted version of the social conservatism subscale of the 12-item Social and Economic Conservatism Scale (Everett, 2013). Participants were asked to indicate the extent of their positivity or negativity toward nine socially related issues (e.g., "traditional American customs and values," "LGBTQ+ rights," "multiculturalism") on a 100-point feeling thermometer (0 = extreme coldness/negativity to 100 = extreme warmth/positivity; 50 indicated neutrality toward an issue). Higher values indicate greater social conservatism (α = .87).

Analysis Plan

The analysis plan was identical to that of Study 1 and Study 2, with two exceptions. First, in all ANOVA models, a multi-categorical Participant Race variable with indicator coding (White = 1, Black = 2, Latine = 3, Asian = 4) replaced the dichotomous variable used in Study 2. In all regression models, dummy coding was used to assess differences by Participant Race. Since the present study focused on evaluative differences between a White and Black candidate, all regression models were conducted twice, first with White participants designated as the reference group and second with Black participants designated as the reference group.

In addition, rather than only assessing the moderating role of political orientation, three identical models were run for each outcome to assess the moderating role of conservatism using different operationalizations. Specifically, we assessed the moderating roles of symbolic political ideology and two subcomponents of operational political ideology: economic operational political ideology and social operational political ideology (Popp & Rudolph, 2011).

Results

A summary of results for Study 3 is presented in Table 5. In an attempt to increase the readability/accessibility of Study 3's findings, we have chosen to report in-depth findings for analyses using the traditional Political Orientation measure and abridged discussions of the effects of the three additional measures of political ideology. Detailed results by Symbolic, Economic Operational, and Social Operational Political Ideology are available in Supplemental Materials.

Manipulation Check

Consistent with the intent of the Diversity Manipulation and findings from Studies 1 and 2, participants in the Diversity Condition (M = 4.14, SD = .95) believed the organization valued diversity to a greater extent than participants in the Neutral Condition (M = 3.67, SD = 1.04), $F(1, 1882)$ = 55.65, $p < .001$, η_p^2 = .029. This difference did not vary by Participant Race, $F(1, 1882)$ = 1.05, p = .368, η_p^2 = .002, nor was there a main effect of Participant Race (p = .828).

Table 5

Study 3 Summary of Effects by Different Measures of Political Ideology and Reference Groups

Measure	Candidate ratings	Candidate ranking	Hiring fairness
Political orientation			
White reference group	Black Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias†	Black Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	
Black reference group	White Ps, in DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	White Ps, in DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias Latine Ps: —	
Symbolic political ideology			
White reference group	Black Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	Black Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	
Black reference group	White Ps, in DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	White Ps, in DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias Latine Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-Black bias	
Economic operational political ideology			
White reference group		Black Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias Asian Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	
Black reference group	White Ps, in DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	White Ps, in DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias Latine Ps: —	
Social operational political ideology			
White reference group	Black Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias†		Asian Ps: In NC, White hire: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias† In NC, Black hire: ↑ Conservatism → anti-Black bias†
Black reference group	White Ps, in DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	Latine Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-Black bias	Asian Ps: In NC, White hire: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias† In NC, Black hire: ↑ Conservatism → anti-Black bias†

Note. Simple slopes provided only for effects that are part of a significant or marginal interaction. All effects shown are significant at $p < .05$ unless otherwise noted. DC = Diversity Condition; NC = Neutral Condition.

† $p < .10$.

Results did not differ after controlling for the Hiring Manipulation. Overall, results for the manipulation check mirrored findings from Studies 1 and 2 for White participants.

Outcomes Prior to the Hiring Manipulation

See Table 6 for means of the continuous outcome and percentage breakdowns of binary outcome.

Candidate Ratings. Similar to Studies 1 and 2, a mixed factorial ANOVA indicated a main effect of Candidate Race, $F(1, 1882) = 20.86$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .011$, with the Black candidate rated significantly more favorably than the White candidate. This was qualified by an interaction with the Diversity Manipulation, $F(1, 1882) = 4.87$, $p = .027$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, such that the Black candidate was rated significantly more favorably than the White candidate in the Diversity Condition ($p < .001$) compared to the Neutral Condition ($p = .097$). Candidate Race also interacted marginally with Participant Race, $F(3, 1882) = 2.12$, $p = .096$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, with the Black candidate being rated significantly more favorably than the White candidate among Black ($p = .002$) and Latine ($p = .002$) participants and marginally more favorably among White participants ($p = .068$). Candidate ratings did not differ significantly

among Asian participants ($p = .200$). The Candidate Race × Diversity Manipulation × Participant Race interaction was not significant, $F(3, 1882) = .85$, $p = .466$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$.

Three-Way Diversity Manipulation × Political Ideology × Participant Race Interactions. As in Studies 1 and 2, for analyses exploring the moderating role of political ideology, we computed a difference score of the candidates' ratings to simplify analyses. With this difference score, higher levels indicate more favorability toward the Black (vs. White) candidate. As a reminder, dummy coding was used with White participants and then Black participants as the reference group to assess differences by participant race. To simplify reporting, we only discuss effects that include the Diversity Manipulation and that are not redundant with the ANOVA results reported above.

Political Orientation—White Reference Group. Results indicated a significant effect of political orientation, $B = -.82$, $\beta = -.09$, $SE = .29$, $p = .005$, 95% CI $[-1.39, -.24]$, indicating that among White participants (reference group), higher levels of conservatism were associated with significantly greater favorability toward the White candidate. This was qualified by the focal and marginally significant three-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race interaction between White (reference group) and

Table 6
Study 3 Means and Percentages of Outcomes Prior to the Hiring Manipulation for Overall Sample and by Participant Race/Ethnicity

			Diversity manipulation			
			Neutral condition		Diversity condition	
	M (SD)/%		*M (SD)/%*		*M (SD)/%*	
Outcome	Black candidate	White candidate	Black candidate	White candidate	Black candidate	White candidate
Candidate ratings						
All participants	79.99 (10.64)	78.94 (11.48)	79.68 (10.69)	79.19 (10.61)	80.30 (10.59)	78.70 (12.26)
White participants	79.51 (10.81)	78.91 (11.68)	79.02 (10.78)	78.83 (9.94)	79.98 (10.83)	78.98 (13.10)
Black participants	80.84 (10.59)	78.77 (12.23)	79.86 (11.34)	79.38 (12.94)	81.70 (9.84)	78.24 (11.59)
Latine participants	82.49 (9.07)	80.42 (10.19)	82.35 (9.49)	80.48 (10.80)	82.65 (8.63)	80.35 (9.53)
Asian participants	78.64 (10.99)	77.75 (10.84)	79.50 (10.44)	79.18 (10.45)	77.80 (11.49)	76.35 (11.08)
Ranking candidates						
All participants	58.1%	41.9%	57.0%	43.0%	59.2%	40.8%
White participants	57.7%	42.3%	56.4%	43.6%	59.0%	41.0%
Black participants	58.3%	41.7%	54.1%	45.9%	62.0%	38.0%
Latine participants	59.0%	41.0%	61.8%	38.2%	55.8%	44.2%
Asian participants	59.0%	41.0%	57.9%	42.1%	60.2%	39.8%

Black participants, indicating that differences in candidate ratings between Black and White participants were dependent on both the Diversity Manipulation and political orientation, $B = 2.28$, ß $= .04$, $SE = 1.24$, $p = .067$, 95% CI [−.16, 4.71] (see Figure 7).

Consistent with Study 1 and Study 2, follow-up analyses indicated that among White participants, conservatism was associated with significantly more pro-White favorability in the Diversity Condition, $B = −1.27$, ß $= −.06$, $SE = .46$, $p = .006$, 95% CI [−2.17, −.36], but not in the Neutral Condition ($p = .325$). Among Black participants, conservatism was associated with marginally greater favorability toward the White candidate in the *Neutral Condition, B* $= −1.55$, ß $= −.07$, $SE = .81$, $p = .055$, 95% CI [−3.13, .03], but not in the Diversity Condition ($p = .800$).

There was no evidence that patterns for Asian or Latine participants differed significantly from patterns for White participants (reference group).

Political Orientation—Black Reference Group. Results revealed a significant effect of the Diversity Manipulation, $B = 2.98$, ß $= .14$, $SE = 1.22$, $p = .015$, 95% CI [.59, 5.37], indicating that among Black participants (reference group), pro-diversity messaging was associated with significantly greater favorability toward the Black candidate. Aside from the focal and marginally significant three-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race interaction between Black (reference group) and White participants discussed above (see Figure 7), there were no other significant three-way interactions. The lack of three-way interactions between Black and Asian participants and between Black and Latine participants indicates that the interactive effect of political orientation and the Diversity Manipulation did not significantly differ between Black and Asian or Black and Latine participants.

Candidate Ratings by Different Measures of Political Ideology. Across measures of political ideology, analyses consistently revealed that the interactive impact of the Diversity Manipulation and Political Ideology depended on whether the participant was White or Black. Specifically, among White participants, conservatism was consistently associated with significantly greater pro-White ratings in the Diversity Condition but unassociated with candidate ratings in the Neutral Condition across the four measures of political ideology.

The opposite pattern appeared for Black participants: Conservatism was often, though not always, associated with greater pro-White ratings in the Neutral Condition but was never associated with candidate ratings in the Diversity Condition. Specifically, in the Neutral Condition, symbolic conservatism was significantly associated with pro-White ratings (see Figure 8), social operational conservatism was marginally associated with pro-White ratings (see Figure 9), and economic operational conservatism was not significantly associated with ratings.

There was no evidence that candidate rating outcomes for Asian and Latine participants differed significantly from patterns for either White or Black participants. However, inspection of simple slopes suggests that, in general, Latine participants did not significantly modulate their candidate ratings depending on political ideology in either condition, but conservative political orientation and symbolic conservatism among Asian participants predicted more favorable pro-White ratings regardless of condition.

Candidate Ranking. A logistic regression was conducted, specifying Participant Race as an indicator variable and White Participants as the reference group. Results revealed a nonsignificant Diversity Manipulation × Participant Race interaction, $\chi^2(3) = 2.67$, $p = .445$.

Three-Way Diversity Manipulation × Political Ideology × Participant Race Interactions. Political Orientation—White Reference Group. Results revealed a significant effect of political orientation, $B = −.18$, $SE = .05$, $OR = .84$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.27, −.08], with a 1SD increase in conservatism among White participants predicting a 20% greater likelihood of ranking the White candidate over the Black candidate. This was qualified by the focal and marginally significant three-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race interaction between White (reference group) and Black participants, $B = .46$, $SE = .25$, $OR = 1.59$, $p = .064$, 95% CI [−.03, .95] (see Figure 10). Follow-up analyses revealed that among White participants, a 1SD increase in conservatism was associated with a 29% increased likelihood of ranking the White candidate over the Black candidate in the Diversity Condition, $B = −.25$, $SE = .07$, $OR = .776$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [−.39, −.12], but was not associated with candidate ranking in the Neutral Condition ($p = .188$).

Figure 7

Three-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race for Differences in Candidate Ratings
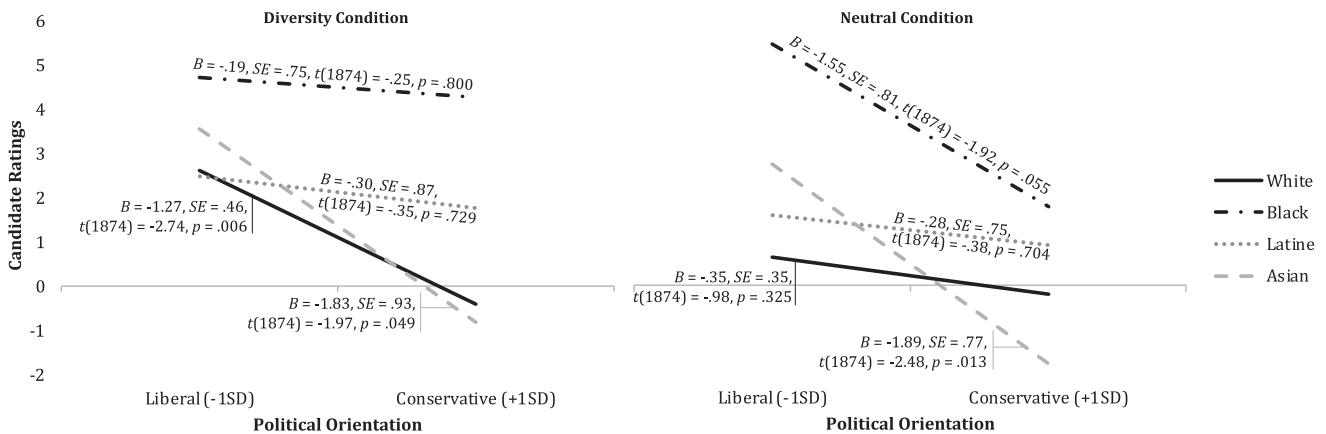
Note. Higher ratings indicate pro-Black favorability. *SE* = standard error.

Oppositely, among Black participants, a 1*SD* increase in conservatism was associated with a 43% increased likelihood of ranking the White candidate over the Black candidate in the Neutral Condition, $B = -.36$, $SE = .18$, $OR = .701$, $p = .044$, 95% CI $[-.70, -.01]$, but was not associated with candidate ranking in the Diversity Condition ($p = .709$).

As with the previous outcome of rating differences, there was no evidence that patterns among Asian or Latine participants differed significantly from patterns among White participants.

Political Orientation—Black Reference Group. Results revealed a marginally significant effect of political orientation, $B = -.20$, $SE = .11$, $OR = .817$, $p = .076$, 95% CI $[-.43, .02]$, with a 1*SD* increase in conservatism among Black participants predicting a 22% greater likelihood of ranking the White candidate over the Black candidate. In addition to the marginally significant focal three-way Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race interaction between Black (reference group) and White participants discussed above, there was a significant three-way interaction between Black

(reference group) and Latine participants, $B = -.72$, $SE = .32$, $OR = .488$, $p = .025$, 95% CI $[-1.35, -.09]$ (see Figure 10).

Follow-up analyses for the Latine participants did not reveal an effect of conservatism among Latine participants in either the Diversity ($p = .255$) or Neutral Condition ($p = .119$) but did reveal an effect of the Diversity Manipulation among conservative Latine participants, such that the presence of pro-diversity messaging was associated with a 114% increased likelihood of ranking the White candidate over the Black candidate, $B = -.76$, $SE = .37$, $OR = .467$, $p = .041$, 95% CI $[-1.49, -.03]$.

There was no evidence that Black participants (reference group) differed from Asian participants.

Candidate Ranking by Different Measures of Political Ideology. Results indicated that the interactive impact of the Diversity Manipulation and Political Ideology on candidate ranking depended on whether the participant was White, Black, Latine, or Asian. Results for White and Black participants looked similar to results for Candidate Ratings. With the exception of the social operational

Figure 8

Three-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Symbolic Political Ideology × Participant Race for Differences in Candidate Ratings
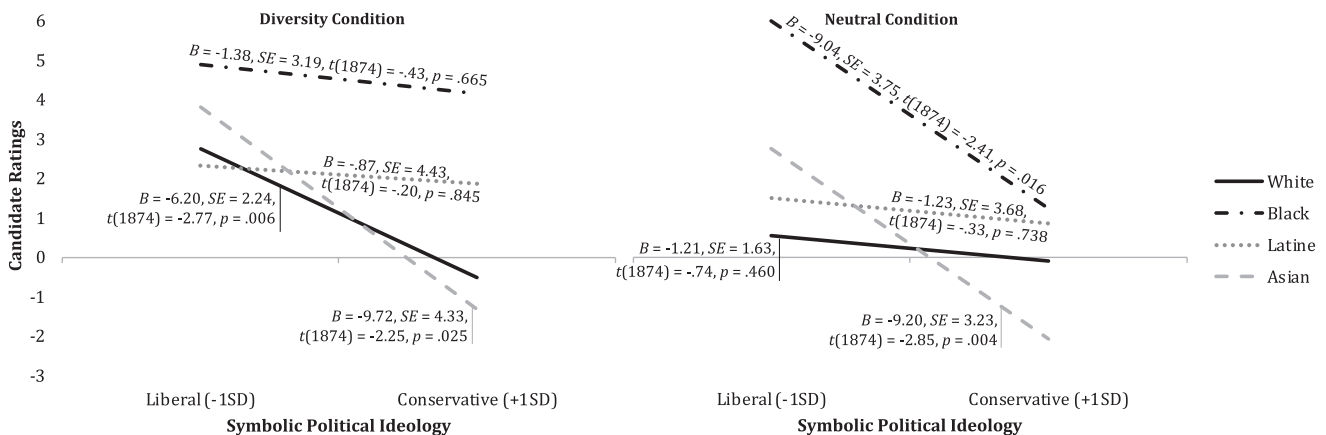
Note. Higher ratings indicate pro-Black favorability. *SE* = standard error.

Figure 9

Three-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Social Operational Political Ideology × Participant Race for Differences in Candidate Ratings
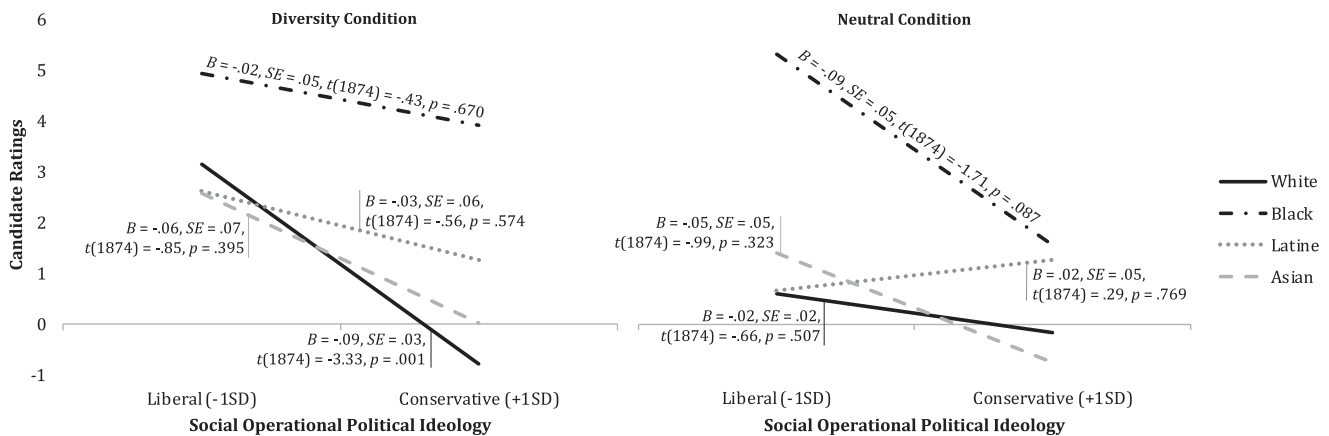
Note. Higher ratings indicate pro-Black favorability. *SE* = standard error.

measure of political ideology, White participants displayed a pattern consistent with what we have seen previously: Conservatism was associated with a greater likelihood of ranking the White candidate higher in the Diversity Condition but was unassociated with candidate ranking in the Neutral Condition. Among Black participants, also with the exception of the social operational measure of political ideology, conservatism was associated with a greater likelihood of ranking the White candidate higher in the Neutral Condition but not the Diversity Condition.

Candidate ranking outcomes were less consistent across measures of political ideology for Asian and Latine participants. There was consistent evidence that Latine participants differed from the pattern for Black participants, but follow-up analyses were inconsistent for Latine participants: Symbolic conservatism (see Figure 11) and social operational conservatism (see Figure 12) were associated with a lower likelihood of ranking the White candidate higher in the Neutral Condition and not in the Diversity Condition. Conservative

political orientation and economic operational conservatism were not associated with candidate ranking among Latine participants in either the Diversity or Neutral Condition.

Finally, only for one measure of political ideology (economic operational) did significant differences appear between White and Asian participants (see Figure 13). Among Asian participants, economic conservatism was associated with a greater likelihood of ranking the White candidate higher in the Neutral Condition but not in the Diversity Condition.

Outcome After the Hiring Manipulation

See Table 7 for means of perceived fairness of the hiring decision.
Perceptions of Fairness in Hiring Decision. Like Study 1, but not Study 2, the between-subjects ANOVA did not indicate a main effect of the Diversity Manipulation, $F(1, 1874) = .003$, $p = .956$, $\eta_p^2 = .000$. The Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation

Figure 10

Three-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race for Differences in Candidate Ranking
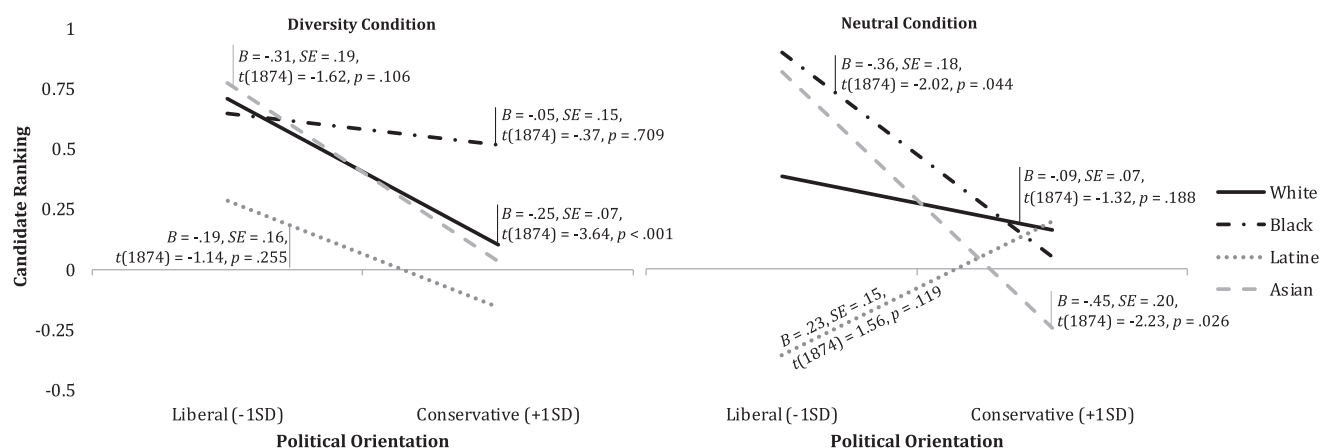
Note. Higher values indicate that the Black candidate was ranked higher than the White candidate. *SE* = standard error.

interaction was nonsignificant, $F(1, 1874) = .98$, $p = .323$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, as was the Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Participant Race interaction, $F(3, 1874) = 1.73$, $p = .159$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$. Mirroring Studies 1 and 2, however, there was a main effect of the Hiring Manipulation, such that participants who were told the Black candidate was hired believed the decision was significantly fairer than those who were told the White candidate was hired, $F(1, 1874) = 58.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .030$.

Four-Way Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Political Ideology × Participant Race Interactions. *Political Orientation—White Reference Group.* Results indicated a significant Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation interaction, $B = -.26$, $\beta = -.07$, $SE = .12$, $p = .026$, 95% CI $[-.49, -.03]$, suggesting that among White participants (reference group), the effect of both the Diversity and Hiring manipulations depended on political orientation. Follow-up analyses of the three-way interaction revealed that higher levels of conservatism among White participants who learned that the White candidate was hired predicted higher perceptions of fairness in the Diversity Condition, $B = .16$, $\beta = .07$, $SE = .06$, $p = .012$, 95% CI $[.04, .28]$, but not in the Neutral Condition ($p = .813$). Conversely, when White participants learned that the Black candidate was hired, higher conservatism was associated with marginally lower perceptions of fairness in the Neutral Condition, $B = -.08$, $\beta = -.04$, $SE = .05$, $p = .083$, 95% CI $[-.18, .01]$, and significantly lower perceptions of fairness in the Diversity Condition, $B = -.20$, $\beta = -.09$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$, 95% CI $[-.31, -.09]$.

There was no evidence of significance of the focal four-way Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race interactions, which suggests that there were no significant differences in perceptions of fairness of the hiring decision when comparing Black ($p = .245$), Latine ($p = .731$), or Asian ($p = .636$) participants to White (reference group) participants.

Political Orientation—Black Reference Group. Results indicated a marginally significant effect of political orientation, $B = -.11$, $\beta = -.11$, $SE = .06$, $p = .077$, 95% CI $[-.23, .01]$, with higher conservatism among Black participants predicting marginally lower

perceptions of fairness, regardless of the candidate hired. There was no evidence of significance of the focal four-way Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Political Orientation × Participant Race interactions, which suggests that there were no significant differences in perceptions of fairness of the hiring decision when comparing White ($p = .245$), Latine ($p = .505$), or Asian ($p = .633$) participants to Black (reference group) participants.

Perceptions of Fairness in Hiring Decision by Different Measures of Political Ideology. Results revealed that the interactive impact of the Diversity Manipulation and Political Ideology depended on whether the participant was White, Black, or Asian; however, unlike with the other outcomes, this was present only when considering social operational political ideology (see Figure 14). Among White participants, social conservatism interacted differently with the Diversity Manipulation depending on whether the White or Black candidate was hired. Specifically, when the White candidate was hired, social conservatism among White participants was associated with greater perceptions of fairness in the Diversity Condition and not in the Neutral Condition. When the Black candidate was hired, social conservatism among White participants was associated with lower perceptions of fairness in the Diversity Condition and in the Neutral Condition.

While the pattern of perceived fairness among Asian participants differed from both White and Black participants, follow-up analyses revealed a consistent trend for Asian participants regardless of the reference group. When the White candidate was hired, social conservatism among Asian participants was associated with greater perceptions of fairness in the Neutral Condition but not in the Diversity Condition. When the Black candidate was hired, social conservatism among Asian participants was associated with lower perceptions of fairness in the Neutral Condition but not in the Diversity Condition.

Unlike previous outcomes, there was not a consistent pattern of results for Black participants, with nonsignificant simple effects of political ideology across measures and conditions. No differences were found when comparing Latine participants to White or Black participants with any measures of political ideology.

Figure 11

Three-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Symbolic Political Ideology × Participant Race for Differences in Candidate Ranking
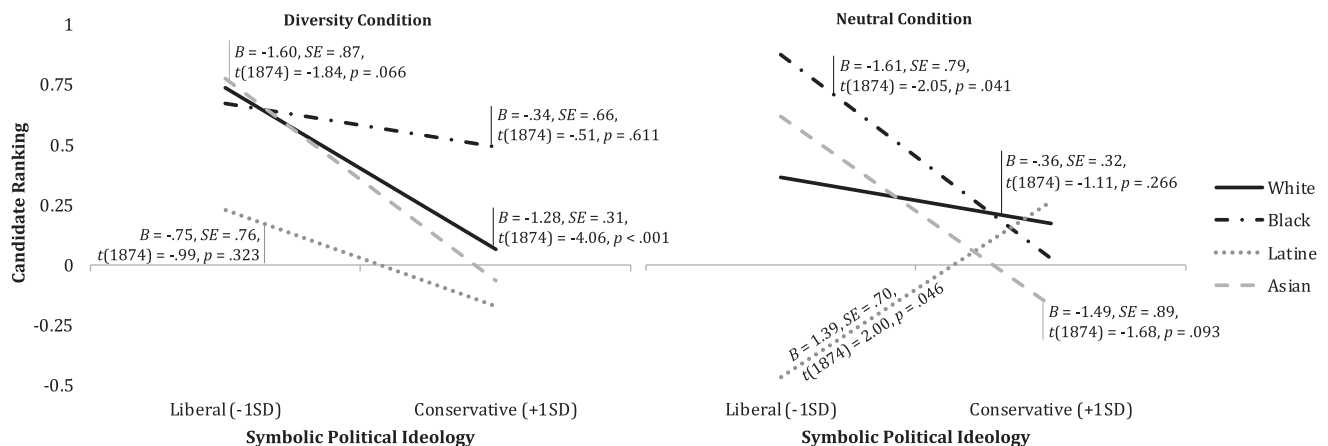
Note. Higher values indicate that the Black candidate was ranked higher than the White candidate. SE = standard error.

Figure 12

Three-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Social Operational Political Ideology × Participant Race for Differences in Candidate Ranking
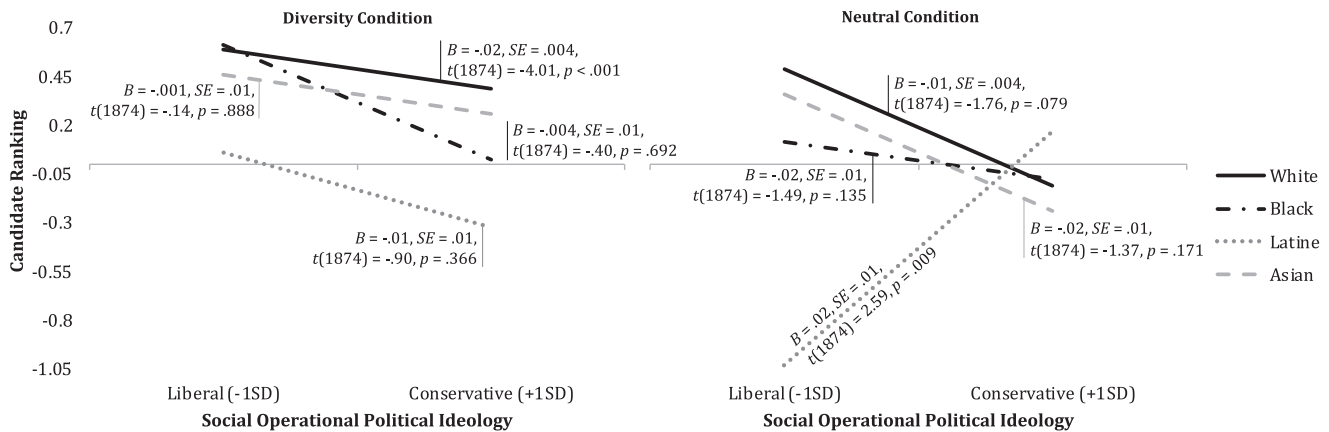
Note. Higher values indicate that the Black candidate was ranked higher than the White candidate. *SE* = standard error.

Discussion

Study 3 aimed to replicate and expand findings from Study 1 and Study 2 using more nuanced conceptualizations of both participant race and participant political ideology. Consistent with findings from the first two studies, Study 3 found that for White participants, higher levels of conservatism were consistently associated with more pro-White hiring outcomes in the context of diversity cues but not in the absence of diversity cues. Patterns were similar across different operationalizations of political ideology, though they tended to be stronger for symbolic conceptualizations compared to operational (especially social operational) conceptualizations. This is consistent with the interpretation that among White participants, the polarizing impacts of diversity cues are due more to identity-based, symbolic aspects of political ideology as opposed to more policy-based conservatism. This has important implications for our

understanding of White individuals' responses to diversity cues: It seems that responses are driven less by policy concerns and more by ideological and symbolic concerns.

Study 3 also clarified the impact of participant race on politically polarized hiring decisions. Though there was some variability across outcomes, we found the most evidence that Black participants diverged most strongly from White participants in their pattern of results. Specifically, among Black participants, conservatism was more strongly associated with pro-White outcomes in the *absence* of diversity cues than in the presence of diversity cues. In other words, Black conservatives seemed to have a more pro-White bias at baseline but became less pro-White in the context of diversity cues. This may suggest that, unlike White participants, Black participants interpreted the diversity cues as a reminder of egalitarianism rather than a politicized cue that prompted backlash.

Figure 13

Three-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Economic Operational Political Ideology × Participant Race for Differences in Candidate Ranking
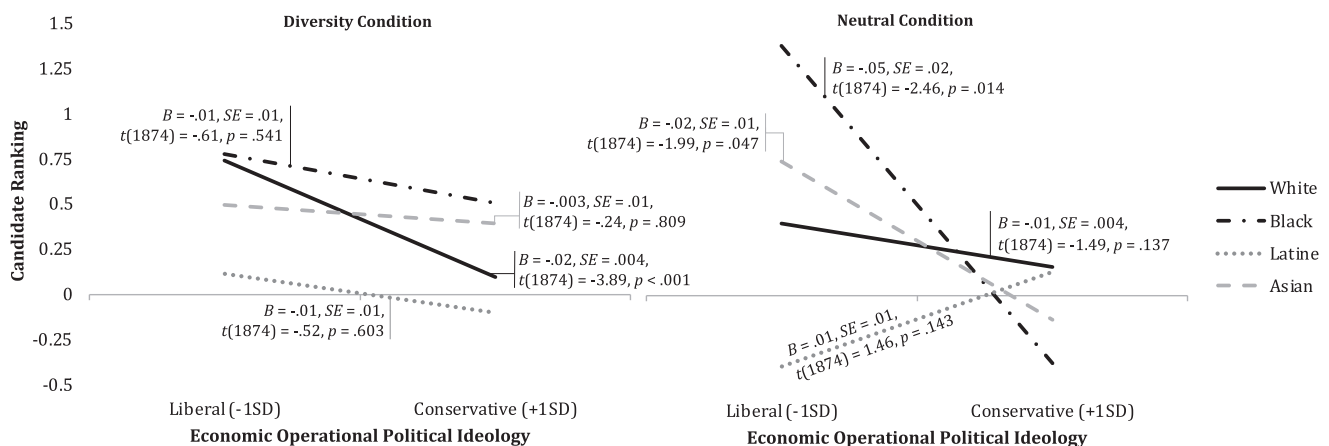
Note. Higher values indicate that the Black candidate was ranked higher than the White candidate. *SE* = standard error.

Table 7

Study 3 Means of Perceived Fairness of Hiring Decision for Overall Sample and by Participant Race/Ethnicity

			Diversity manipulation			
			Neutral condition		Diversity condition	
	M (*SD*)		*M* (*SD*)		*M* (*SD*)	
Study 3 participants	Black candidate	White candidate	Black candidate	White candidate	Black candidate	White candidate
All participants	**6.09 (1.02)**	**5.61 (1.24)**	6.05 (1.00)	5.63 (1.20)	6.12 (1.03)	5.59 (1.28)
White participants	6.08 (1.06)	5.62 (1.24)	6.05 (1.02)	5.61 (1.20)	6.11 (1.11)	5.64 (1.26)
Black participants	6.13 (.97)	5.47 (1.38)	5.93 (1.06)	5.60 (1.24)	6.30 (.87)	5.34 (1.48)
Latine participants	6.12 (.92)	5.76 (1.18)	6.15 (.96)	5.81 (1.17)	6.09 (.88)	5.70 (1.20)
Asian participants	6.03 (.93)	5.54 (1.14)	6.10 (.89)	5.50 (1.18)	5.97 (.97)	5.58 (1.11)

*Note.* Bolded values indicate a main effect of the Hiring Manipulation.

For Asian and Latine participants, there was some inconsistent evidence that patterns of results differed from White and Black participants. These different patterns were most evident when comparing Black and Latine participants on the candidate ranking variable: Across measures of political ideology, Latine conservatism was associated with *less* pro-White hiring recommendations in the Neutral Condition and was unrelated to hiring recommendations in the Diversity Condition. This pattern did not appear for the other outcomes, however, so it should be interpreted with caution.

There was very little evidence that Asian participants differed from White or Black participants in their pattern of results, but analysis of simple effects suggests that Asian conservatives (vs. liberals) may be more likely to have pro-White hiring recommendations regardless of the presence or absence of diversity cues. This was not universal,

Figure 14

Four-Way Interaction of Diversity Manipulation × Hiring Manipulation × Social Political Operational Ideology × Participant Race for Perceptions of Fairness in Hiring Decision
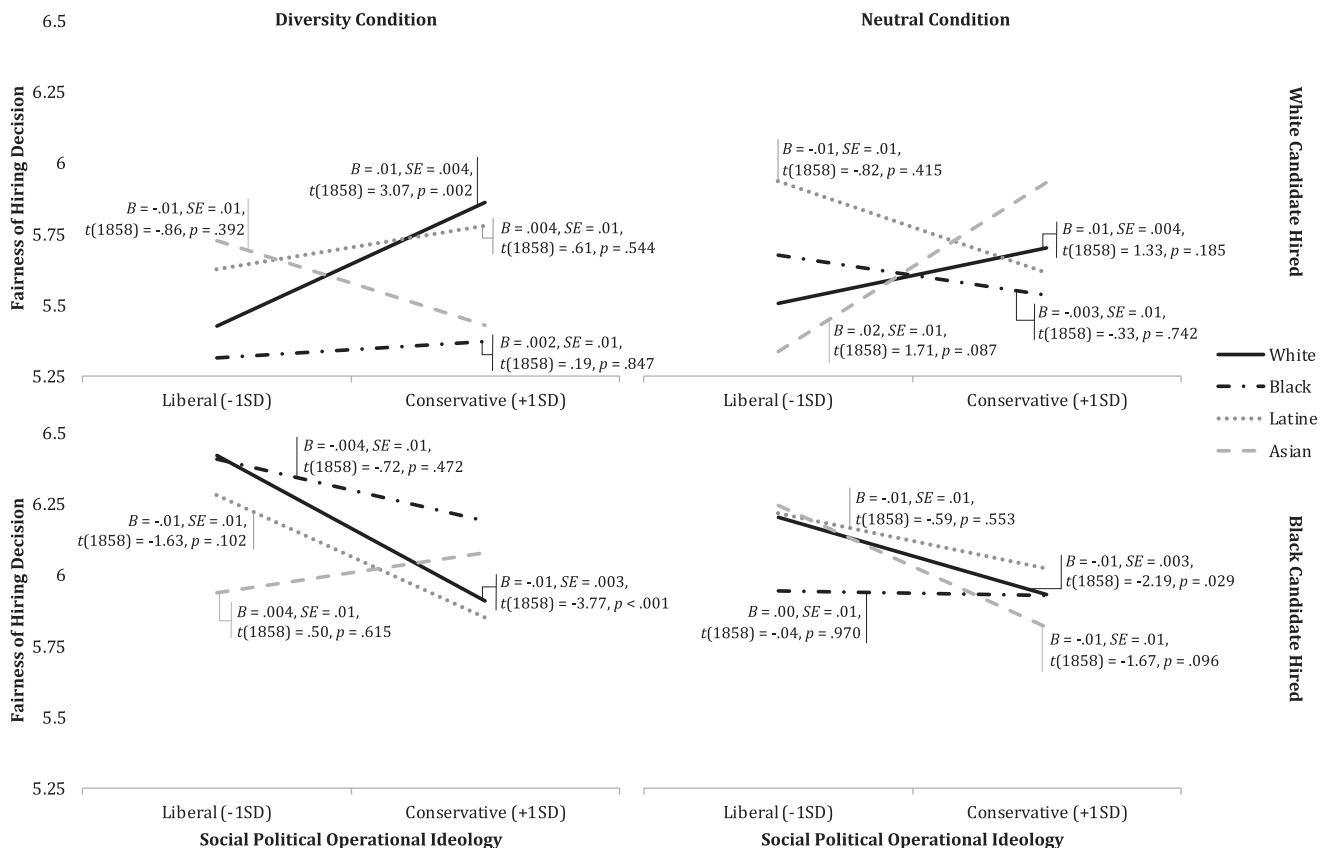
Note. Higher values indicate greater perceptions of fairness. *SE* = standard error.

however, so it should also be interpreted with caution. Overall, the inconsistency and diversity of patterns among different groups of BIPOC participants helps us understand the inconsistent results from Study 2 but points to the importance of further investigation of subgroup differences within the larger BIPOC community.

General Discussion

A summary of findings across all three studies is presented in Table 8, and a summary of major takeaways is presented in Figure 15.

In the present research, three experimental studies investigated whether the presence of organizational diversity cues (i.e., pro-diversity messaging) impacted hiring recommendations for diverse job candidates and whether the impact of diversity cues depended on political ideology. Diversity cues appeared to have substantially different impacts on hiring recommendations depending on political ideology. There is also evidence that White and BIPOC participants—particularly Black participants—respond differently to diversity cues depending on political ideology. Overall, it appears that for White participants, the presence of diversity cues can enhance the impact that ideology plays in hiring bias: Conservatism tends to more strongly predict pro-White hiring outcomes in the presence of diversity cues than in the absence of diversity cues. In this way, diversity cues can be conceptualized as facilitating politically motivated decision making for White individuals: when individuals are ideologically aligned with pro-diversity efforts (i.e., liberals), diversity cues can facilitate pro-minority decisions; but when individuals are ideologically aligned with antidiversity efforts (i.e., conservatives), diversity cues can facilitate pro-White decisions.

Among BIPOC participants, a more complex pattern emerged. In Study 2, in which BIPOC participants were grouped together in a single category, we found that BIPOC participants sometimes had stronger and sometimes had weaker politically motivated hiring outcomes compared to White participants. Study 3 helped to clarify

the impact of participant race, suggesting that Latine and Asian participants rarely differed significantly from patterns for White participants or Black participants. Black participants, on the other hand, demonstrated a distinctly different pattern from White participants: for Black participants, conservatism was more strongly associated with pro-White outcomes in the absence of diversity cues than in the presence of diversity cues. This suggests that for Black participants, the diversity cue may have facilitated a more objective, unbiased consideration of candidates rather than a more politically motivated consideration. Specifically, given that the target candidates assessed in the present study were White and Black, the distinct responses among Black participants may be explained by the phenomenon of social identity enhancement, where the perceived realistic economic threat posed by the White candidate may have inadvertently promoted behavior in line with facilitating ingroup social mobility (Duckitt et al., 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Though Study 3 suggests that Black participants may have a distinct response to diversity cues not shared by White participants, more research is needed to disambiguate the impact of race/ethnicity on backlash to diversity cues.

Though not a primary finding, it is also notable that, as seen in other work in which participants make explicit hiring recommendations, there was a general tendency for participants—both White and BIPOC—to favor the underrepresented (Black) candidate over the equivalently qualified overrepresented (White) candidate (see, e.g., Williams & Ceci, 2015). We anticipate that at least part of this tendency reflects self-presentational concerns, particularly given the continuing evidence of anti-Black hiring bias in field studies (Quillian et al., 2017).

Theoretical Implications

The present research is not only one of the first to examine how hiring decisions might be impacted by the presence of diversity cues

Table 8
Summary of Effects of Political Orientation Across Studies 1–3

Study	Candidate ratings	Candidate ranking	Hiring fairness
Study 1			
White participants	In DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	In DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	In DC, White hire: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias In DC, Black hire: ↑ Conservatism → anti-Black bias
Study 2			
White participants		In DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	In DC, White hire: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias
BIPOC participants		In DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	In DC, White hire: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias In DC, Black hire: ↑ Conservatism → anti-Black bias
Study 3			
White reference group	Black Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias[†]	Black Ps, in NC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	
Black reference group	White Ps, in DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias	White Ps, in DC: ↑ Conservatism → pro-White bias Latine Ps: —	

Note. Simple slopes provided only for effects that are part of a significant or marginal interaction. All effects shown are significant at $p < .05$ unless otherwise noted. DC = Diversity Condition; NC = Neutral Condition; BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and people of color.
[†] $p < .10$.

Figure 15
Major Takeaways

Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
White Participants	Diversity cues can be conceptualized as facilitating **politically-motivated** decision-making.	
	BIPOC Participants / More complex pattern	**Black** Participants / Diversity cues may facilitate a **more objective, unbiased** consideration of candidates rather than more politically-motivated consideration.
		Asian Participants — **Latine** Participants / Rarely differed significantly from patterns for White participants or Black participants.

Note. BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

but also one of the first to demonstrate large and important differences in responses depending on participants' political ideology. Past experimental work investigating the impact of organizational diversity initiatives on White and BIPOC perceivers has generally found little support for individual difference moderators, particularly among White and other advantaged perceivers. For example, Dover et al. (2016) found that the diversity-related threat elicited from White individuals in a hiring simulation did not differ depending on political orientation, prejudice, system-justifying beliefs, or other relevant individual differences. Similarly, when assessing how White participants responded to a White employee getting passed over for a promotion in the presence (vs. absence) of diversity cues, Kaiser et al. (2022) found no consistent evidence of moderation by individual differences, like social dominance orientation. Unlike the present research, however, participants in Kaiser et al.'s (2022) studies provided feedback from the perspective of observers rather than that of individuals personally involved in the decision-making process, and participants in Dover et al.'s (2016) study responded as recipients of an organization's diversity values rather than as individuals expected to make decisions that align with an organization's diversity values. Thus, the lack of support for individual difference moderators in the context of pro-diversity cues in past experimental work may be attributable to differences in study designs, specifically the role of participants within the studies.

The powerful role that political ideology played in the present research not only helps us answer the question of who responds to diversity cues with backlash versus buy-in, but it also illuminates some of the psychological underpinnings for why diversity cues might sometimes cause backlash. In particular, the present work suggests that political ideological concerns motivate differential hiring recommendations of candidates from diverse ethnic/racial backgrounds in the presence of diversity cues, thus aligning with the longstanding and current racialized U.S. political climate. Our findings about the powerful role political ideology plays for both White and BIPOC participants indicate that reactance to diversity cues may stem less from one's ethnic/racial identity concerns and more from political identity concerns, providing further support for the theoretical concept of ideological social identity (Devine, 2015). Ethnic/racial identity concerns, however, may interact with political identity concerns for BIPOC individuals if the job candidate is of the same racial/ethnic background, as evidenced by the pro-Black bias

among Black conservatives in the presence of diversity cues but a pro-White bias in their absence in Study 3. On the other hand, this could be a unique pattern seen only among Black individuals whose ethnic/racial identity concerns have been shown to outweigh political ideological concerns with regard to policy support (Jefferson, 2020; Philpot, 2017).

This work also underscores the relevance and importance of understanding the direct role of political ideology. While individual difference moderators, such as system-justifying beliefs, social dominance orientation, and right-wing authoritarianism, have consistently been found to correlate with and often been used as a proxy for political conservatism, researchers have argued that political ideology is theoretically and operationally distinct from these constructs that are instead measures of context-dependent personality predispositions present among individuals across the political ideological spectrum (Everett, 2013; Feldman, 2003; Stenner, 2009; Wronski et al., 2018). As such, understanding the direct role of political ideology in hiring decisions in the presence of diversity cues is relevant and necessary, particularly in the current politically charged climate in the United States.

Furthermore, the present research highlights the necessity of moving beyond the single-item measure of political ideology to investigate the differential impact of symbolic versus operational political ideology. The interactive effect of one's affective attachments to the source of policy and political ideological social identity supports the distinction between political ideology as a set of political beliefs (i.e., operational political ideology) and a political ideological social identity (i.e., symbolic political ideology) that is increasingly influenced by ingroup cues and socialization as one's affective attachment to that group increases (Malka & Lelkes, 2010). In Studies 1 and 2, political ideology was measured using the traditional ideological self-placement item; while this has been the standard approach to measuring symbolic ideology and has been shown to be a reliable predictor of policy support, Devine (2015) argued that it does not adequately account for psychological ingroup attachment, making it impossible to know whether the reported ideological self-placement is central to one's self-concept. As such, we added additional conceptualizations of political ideology in Study 3.

The antiminority and pro-White biases displayed among White and non-Black conservatives in response to pro-diversity messaging support the expectation that conservatives view diversity initiatives

as a threat to the status quo, leading to more favoritism toward the dominant group (Ellis & Stimson, 2012; Harrison et al., 2006; Nosek et al., 2007). Preference for the White candidate among White and non-Black conservatives also serves to perpetuate inequality, a behavioral outcome that is characteristic of conservative ideology (McCarty et al., 2016).

The antiminority bias among White and non-Black conservatives can also stem from perceptions of the Black candidate belonging to a devalued racial group. For White individuals, anti-Black and antiminority sentiment espoused, both implicitly and explicitly, by conservative political elites has and continues to grow, especially as the growth of the Latine population threatens White individuals' status as the racial majority (Abascal, 2023). Such political rhetoric from conservative political elites further solidifies the perception that Black individuals belong to a devalued racial group, especially among symbolic conservatives, for which this rhetoric would serve as an ingroup cue (Camobreco, 2016; Ellis & Stimson, 2009) and would, in turn, predict greater discrimination during the hiring process (Liebkind et al., 2016). Findings in the present research mirror this expectation, with symbolic conservatism predicting a greater pro-White shift compared to economic and social operational conservatism.

Importantly, for most (but not all) of the outcomes, White participants in the Neutral Condition did not differ in their hiring recommendations depending on ideology. This suggests that, on the whole, conservatism is not simply shorthand for prejudice or anti-Blackness among White individuals. Our findings, rather, support a more nuanced impact of conservatism that only becomes predictive of race-based decision making when the status quo is threatened, such as when diversity initiatives are present, when a Black candidate is hired over a White candidate, or when the culture at large is seeking to radically shift the racial hierarchy. In other words, White conservatives in our study appear to be reacting to the perceived threat of egalitarian activism, not the merit or competence of Black individuals themselves. Of course, the lack of effects of political orientation in the Neutral condition may also be a result of social desirability concerns, and field studies or implicit measures should be used to understand the true extent of politically motivated hiring recommendations.

For non-Black ethnic/racial minority groups, anti-Black bias has been well documented. Yi and Todd (2021), for example, showed that Asian American young adults who internalized the Model Minority Myth were more likely to display general anti-Black attitudes as well as oppose pro-Black affirmative action policy. In another study, Pérez et al. (2023) found that Latine individuals who were informed of their group's downgraded status as Americans, and especially those who were also primed with their group's direct comparison to Black Americans, were more likely to display general anti-Black attitudes as well as oppose pro-Black policy, likely in an attempt to distance themselves from the most devalued racial group in the United States—Black Americans. Such anti-Black sentiment among non-Black ethnic/racial minority individuals, especially in the political context, could explain why findings among Latine and Asian participants did not differ and, at times, mirrored the findings among White participants.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the present research does not offer unambiguous recommendations for organizations seeking to enhance the diversity of their workplaces or create more just hiring processes. However, organizations should be aware that those empowered to make hiring decisions may not always respond to pro-diversity efforts in the way organizations expect. Specifically, conservative managers may react against pro-diversity efforts, ironically hindering their goal of increasing the diversity of the organization by discounting qualified non-White candidates. Organizations seeking to enhance the diversity of their workforce may want to consider taking different approaches depending on the political climate and the political ideology of their managers. Among relatively liberal White managers, passionately voicing the importance of diversity to the organization may have its intended effects, but for more conservative managers, a pro-diversity organization may need to consider more direct interventions that increase the diversity of applicant pools, prevent managers from knowing the demographic information of applicants, track hiring or promotion rates by manager, and add diversity-related metrics to performance evaluations and promotion criteria. Organizations might also consider adding safeguards to protect minority candidates from potential backlash, including clear consequences for discriminatory behavior and nonretaliatory human resources procedures for reporting and remediating discrimination. At the very least, organizations must go beyond just espousing pro-diversity values and actually investigate the impact diversity initiatives have on hiring, retention, and promotion of diverse employees. Future work should also explore ways to reduce the impact that diversity cues have on politicized hiring decisions.

Limitations

Some important limitations of the present work should be noted. First, these studies only utilized self-report outcome variables, and participants knew that they were in a study about hiring recommendations. As such, our studies may have elicited more self-presentational concerns than hiring managers actually experience when making their decisions. In addition, we were not able to capture more implicit outcomes that may impact how candidates are reviewed in the real world.

The experimental paradigm used also lacked the psychological realism that comes with the high-stakes choices hiring managers make for an organization. Furthermore, external validity was somewhat limited by our decision to include a highly qualified Latina candidate as a candidate who provided the opportunity for moral credentialing. It is possible that when credentialing opportunities are absent, individuals across the political spectrum will feel more pressure to hire underrepresented groups in the context of diversity cues. Future experimental work should include implicit as well as explicit responses to diverse candidates and should create hiring simulations that are more similar to those that happen in the real world. Future work should also focus explicitly on participants with experience making hiring decisions.

Another limitation to consider is that our samples consisted of a larger proportion of politically liberal (Studies 1–3) and White participants (Studies 2–3) compared to conservative and BIPOC participants, respectively. This unequal distribution of political ideology across participants as well as unequal sample sizes across racial/ethnic groups may have resulted in a loss of statistical power, which reduces the likelihood of detecting significant interaction effects (Frazier et al., 2004). Future research should attempt to

recruit more balanced samples to ensure adequate statistical power to detect meaningful interactions.

Constraints on Generality

To investigate the impact of pro-diversity cues on hiring recommendations, the present experimental work focused on manipulating the presence (vs. absence) of pro-diversity cues and not the content of the diversity cue. Although previous work has shown that individuals are highly sensitive not only to the mere presence of pro-diversity messages but also to their framing (e.g., Dover et al., 2016; Kaiser et al., 2022; Plaut et al., 2011), we believed it was necessary to first establish a causal link between the mere presence of pro-diversity cues and hiring recommendations. Because we did not manipulate the messaging of the pro-diversity cues, we cannot speak to the impact that different pro-diversity messaging may have on hiring recommendations. Future work should consider exploring the link between types of pro-diversity messaging and hiring recommendations. The present experiments also presented participants with information about a single hypothetical organization within the tech industry. The focus on just one hypothetical organization that focuses on tech—an industry particularly hostile to women and BIPOC individuals—also limits generalizability. Future research should explore the impact of pro-diversity cues on hiring recommendations in various industries.

Additionally, in this work, we only looked at decisions about White and Black candidates, and we only compared equivalently qualified men. This focus on White and Black men allowed for interpretive clarity but failed to inform us about how other ethnic/racial and gender groups are perceived in the context of diversity cues. We chose White and Black target candidates as a first step in this research program because those are the two groups most and least associated with the term "diversity" (Unzueta & Binning, 2010). As such, the design provided little ambiguity about which focal candidate—the White versus Black candidate—participants were likely to understand as "contributing to diversity." Future work should look at a more diverse set of job candidates. The lack of intersectional considerations of race and gender also limits our ability to understand how individuals perceive women or nonbinary candidates. Future work should more comprehensively manipulate race and gender in order to more fully elucidate the impact of diversity cues on diverse hiring.

Finally, the fact that participants across all three studies were, on average, fairly politically liberal constrains generalizability to the broader U.S. population, which is, on average, more moderate and conservative (Jones, 2024). Relatedly, designating participants who are one standard deviation above the mean (+1SD) as conservative in samples that are disproportionately liberal may have resulted in sample subsets that do not accurately represent typical conservatives in the broader population. Thus, the unequal distribution of political ideology in our samples may have led to an underestimation in the backlash on hiring recommendations among conservatives in the presence of pro-diversity cues. With politically balanced samples, where participants at +1SD above the mean more accurately represent typical conservatives, we would expect to see a larger effect or greater backlash against the minority candidate in the presence of pro-diversity cues. Future work should aim to recruit samples that better reflect the political ideology of the broader population.

Context of the Research

The present research aimed to integrate theory across social, political, and industrial/organizational psychology to understand the lackluster impacts of pro-diversity initiatives that have been documented over the past several years (e.g., Dover et al., 2016, 2020, 2021; Kaiser et al., 2013; Kalev et al., 2006). Decades of polarizing political rhetoric regarding pro-diversity policy and right-wing efforts to dismantle such policies that have only escalated in recent years (see *An Act Relating to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives at Public Institutions of Higher Education*, 2023; *Executive Order No. 13950*, 2020), continued disparities in employment decisions documented in foundational work across several fields of study, and a lack of experimental work focusing on the perspective of those in a position of power to make hiring decisions informed the design and goal of the present research. By drawing on theory across several fields of psychology, the present research sought to understand whether the presence (or absence) of diversity initiatives could lead to differential hiring recommendations and whether this depended on individual characteristics (i.e., ethnic/racial identity and political ideology). Findings also contribute to our understanding of the differential impact of political symbolic ideology and political operational ideology. Overall, findings emphasize the importance of integrating theory from various fields of psychology as well as investigating how various identities interact in social psychological research, both of which are top priorities to the two authors' research agendas.

Conclusion

Overall, this work suggests that the presence of diversity cues can shape hiring decisions in powerful ways and not always in the direction organizations hope. The presence of diversity cues seems to elicit politically motivated decision making, leading conservatives—particularly White conservatives—to make more pro-White hiring recommendations and leading liberals to make more pro-Black hiring recommendations. This work has important implications for our growing understanding of how organizational pro-diversity messages might not always work in the intended way, as well as for our understanding of how politics and race intersect. Though additional work needs to investigate how conservative backlash to diversity initiatives might impede the careers of underrepresented groups in field settings, these studies provide strong initial evidence that conservative reactivity to pro-diversity efforts continues to shape the way in which job candidates are valued and evaluated.

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