To borrow a phrase: An investigation of the news media's role in racialized student loan policy communication
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Dominique J. Baker

Note: The narrative grant proposal is also posted on my website on the resources page (https://www.dominiquebaker.com/resources). As I shared in a note on that document, I would recommend that folks start this earlier than you think you need to for revising the sample. I used a paper that I had already published but it still took time to make sure it was readable in 20 pages with a single figure (the full paper as a word document is 35 pages with different formatting and an additional 6 tables).

Pathways to racial equity in higher education:

Modeling the antecedents of state affirmative action bans[1]

Dominique J. Baker

Race-based affirmative action arose from the civil rights movement and a long history of racial discrimination (Katznelson, 2005). Originally used to correct historical discrimination and to increase minority representation in business, government, and politics (Bowen & Bok, 1998), race-based affirmative action has evolved to focus on the promotion of diversity due to the Supreme Court decision in the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978; Garces, 2014). Higher education institutions that use race-based affirmative action can consider race as one factor among many in the admissions process (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). Contemporaneous with the public reaction to this ''racial preferencing,'' some states have adopted statewide affirmative action bans, which disallow any public institution in the state from practicing race-based affirmative action (Garces, 2014).

The nine states that have ever banned race-based affirmative action have done so in one of four ways. California (enacted ban in 1996), Washington (1998), Michigan (2006), Nebraska (2008), Arizona (2010), and Oklahoma (2012) adopted via ballot initiative or legislative referendum; Florida (1999) adopted via executive order; and New Hampshire (2011) adopted via the state legislature (Table 1). In a ruling that only Texas was required to implement, the Fifth Circuit Court banned race-based affirmative action in 1996, but the Supreme Court overturned the Fifth Circuit Court's ban in 2003. Critics of bans view these attempts to end race-based affirmative action with concern because there is evidence that the bans have caused declines in the postsecondary enrollment and completion of underrepresented minority students (e.g., Backes, 2012).

Yet despite the adoption of state bans, little empirical research, particularly from a national perspective, has been conducted to explain why certain states have adopted race-based affirmative action

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[1] Significant portions of the policy background and literature review sections have been removed due to the page limits for this writing sample. I have also removed the endnotes and all tables and figures except Figure 1. I retain the text references to tables and figures. The full text, plus all tables and figures, are in the article published at the *American Education Research Journal* in 2019 (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/0002831219833918).

bans while others have not. Understanding the state characteristics related to ban adoption is critical as, once affirmative action bans are adopted, enrollment of underrepresented racial/ethnic minority students decreases at both the undergraduate, for selective institutions, and graduate levels (Backes, 2012; Garces, 2012, 2013; Grodsky & Kurlaender, 2010; Hinrichs, 2012). Bans on affirmative action likely hinder underrepresented racial/ethnic minority students from accessing all of the benefits accrued to the attendees and graduates of more selective institutions (Melguizo, 2010). Additionally, such affirmative action bans may lead to the loss of benefits that numerous scholars have documented emerge from a diverse community of students (e.g., Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

Research investigating the antecedents of state affirmative action bans is critical in light of the potential for inequitable experiences and outcomes for some of the most vulnerable student populations in the United States. The significance of this research is similar to other work investigating the antecedents to education policy (e.g., Doyle, 2006; McLendon, Hearn, & Deaton, 2006). The body of research focused on the antecedents of higher education policy adoption focuses on better explaining the extent to which quantifiable characteristics of states are associated with the likelihood of either the consideration or adoption of a policy. While it is important to understand the effects of policy changes, ''as other states continue to consider such changes in policy, it is important to understand . . . underlying factors that may affect policymakers' decisions'' to adopt the policy (Doyle, 2006, p. 261). Strong policy evaluation results in and of themselves are not enough to ensure policy adoption. This is why it is critical to investigate the conditions under which policies are adopted. Understanding the effects of a policy are worthwhile. However, it is just as important to understand under what circumstances or conditions those policies will or could be adopted in the first place.

In addition, researchers and state policy stakeholders could benefit from additional clarity on the antecedents of ban adoption in order to aid theory-building around why states adopt affirmative action bans and other policies similar to these types of bans. Factors that could contribute to this variation include whether the state allows direct democracy measures on the ballot (i.e., legislative referenda), the success or failure of neighboring states to enact bans, advocacy of ban adoption by influential individuals

(such as Ward Connerly), and the state's demographic composition. Most current statewide bans were adopted via the ballot box, which led some affirmative action supporters to question the idea of allowing a majority to vote on the rights of the minority (Gamble, 1997; Garces, 2012). Nevertheless, the Supreme Court decision in *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action* (2014) deemed constitutional any ballot-adopted bans similar to Michigan's Proposal 2. As opposition to race-based affirmative action increases (e.g., the Trump administration's reversal of guidance on the institutional consideration of race; Green, Apuzzo, & Benner, 2018), the potential for additional ban adoptions also increases.

Considering the dearth of empirical evidence from a national perspective on the antecedents to state affirmative action ban adoption, I investigate the extent to which various characteristics of a state are associated with its likelihood of adopting a statewide affirmative action ban. To examine this, I use a conceptual framework that melds the policy characteristics of states with the sociological underpinnings of state demographic characteristics to analyze an aggregated dataset of key state characteristics. I employ discrete-time survival analysis due to the distinct nature of the unit of analysis for time in the study (Singer & Willet, 1993). I find evidence that policy diffusion and scarcity of access to public flagship higher education institutions (theory of racial threat) are policy antecedents for adoption of state affirmative action bans. Taking all these characteristics together, this study suggests that a state's adoption of an affirmative action ban may come as a reaction to the majority population's fear of scarce access to selective public higher education for White students.

Background on Race-Based Affirmative Action

To understand the policy antecedents of state affirmative action bans, I build on two primary areas of research: the historical and legal context of affirmative action and the empirical research on affirmative action bans. These two areas of research provide the context for state affirmative action ban adoption and the larger significance and motivation for the current research. Due to the page limits for this writing sample, the rest of this section has been removed but please see the full article for the full text.

Conceptual Framework for Factors Influencing Policy Adoption

An investigation into the antecedents of ban adoption requires a melding of multiple disciplinary strains. The conceptual framework for this work focuses on merging research on the association between affirmative action ban adoption and (a) racial threat, (b) the policy characteristics of states, and (c) state demographic characteristics. It is used both to inform the design of the study and selection of the variables and to aid in the interpretation of the findings. Due to the page limits for this writing sample, the explanations of each of these strands has been removed but please see the full article for the full text.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is melded from research on racial threat, policy characteristics of states, and state demographics. The current research tests seven hypotheses based on that literature:

Hypothesis 1: States with a smaller share of White college-age residents will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban.

Hypothesis 2: States with a smaller share of White students attending the state public flagship institution will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban.

Hypothesis 3: States that are geographically close to other states without affirmative action bans will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban.

Hypothesis 4: States with more opportunities or taste for direct democracy will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban.

Hypothesis 5: States with a gubernatorial election in the current year will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban.

Hypothesis 6: States with more conservative citizens will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban.

Hypothesis 7: States with citizens with lower educational attainment will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban.

Data

I create an aggregated data set of state characteristics of the 47 contiguous states, excluding Texas, from 1995 to 2012 (Table 2 lists data sources). I remove Alaska and Hawaii from the sample because neither state is included in geographic diffusion analyses. I exclude Texas because its policy adoption did not occur at the state level. The data set starts 1 year before the first state affirmative action ban passed. Because not all the states have adopted a state affirmative action ban by the end of the data set (2012), the data are right-censored.

Outcome Variable

I operationalize the dependent variable, an indicator variable for the year of adoption of a state affirmative action ban, as equaling 1 for the year during which the state adopts a ban, 0 in all prior years, and missing in all subsequent years. I create this variable from consulting news reports and relevant research (e.g., Blume & Long, 2014; Hinrichs, 2012).

Measures of Racial Threat

I operationalize racial threat as measures of the college-age White population and the percentage of students attending the state flagship institution who are White. While the majority of prior research uses the overall college-age population (e.g., Doyle, 2006), the theory of racial threat and the conceptual framework highlight the need to focus on either the White population or the non-White population. For ease of modeling, I selected White as the measure. The percentage of White residents age 15 to 24 comes from the U.S. Census Bureau intercensal estimates of state populations until 2010 with the remaining years collected from the American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates.

The percentage of White full-time, first-time undergraduate students who attend the state flagship university comes from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, administered by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. To ensure the measures of enrollment are not sensitive to single-year variation, I create three measures of enrollment percentage: single-year, 3-year rolling average, and 5-year rolling average. For example, in the analysis year 1995, the single-year enrollment percentage would be from 1994 to 1995, 3-year rolling average from 1992 to

1995, and the 5-year rolling average from 1990 to 1995. The flagship institutions are selected by

consulting the list of flagship institutions in peer-reviewed articles and nonprofit reports (e.g., Education

Trust, 2006; Pallais & Turner, 2006). The full list of institutions is in Table 3. This operationalization

only allows for one flagship institution per state. I conduct additional sensitivity analyses of the models

(results discussed below), which include measures of the percentage of White full-time, first-time

undergraduate students at all public institutions and at the most selective public institutions in the state

(allowing the number of institutions included for each state to fluctuate instead of being constrained to a

single institution per state).

Measures of Policy Characteristics of States

To control for the policy characteristics of each state, I include measures of policy diffusion,

direct democracy, and election years. It is difficult to determine what type of diffusion might underlie the

adoption of state affirmative action bans because policy entrepreneurs such as Ward Connerly, by

traveling from state to state, could and did influence which states even entertained the idea of an

affirmative action ban. There is evidence that policy entrepreneurs have an influence on the diffusion of

policies (e.g., Mintrom, 1997). Still, this does not explain why certain states adopt the measure and others

do not, especially as Connerly and colleagues did not directly visit or campaign in all the states that

adopted bans. For these reasons, I choose to include a measure of geographic neighbor diffusion to

control for, in addition to the work of policy entrepreneurs, any evidence of learning occurring between

geographically connected states. The work from Blume and Long (2014) discussed above bolsters this

decision to focus geographically.

For policy diffusion, under the assumption that state affirmative action bans diffuse via

geographic neighbors, I use regional diffusion. This measure includes states with a ban in the same region

as the state of interest. I use the four major higher education compacts to determine regions: Midwest

Higher Education Compact, New England Board Higher Education, Southern Regional Education Board,

and Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education.

For the direct democracy measures, I use two separate measures from the National Conference of State Legislatures. The first measure concerns whether the state allows ballot initiatives or popular referenda. Table 4 lists all the states that allow some type of direct democracy. The second measure is how many ballot initiatives, popular referenda, and legislative referenda are on the ballot, each year, for the general election in each state. I also include a measure of gubernatorial election years. For the years of gubernatorial elections, I used Klarner's state partisan balance data.

Measures of State Demographics

To investigate the state demographics, I include measures of citizen ideology, unemployment rate, and educational attainment. The citizen ideology measure is the revised 1960 to 2013 citizen ideology series from W. D. Berry et al. (1998). For this measure, a larger number means that a state is more liberal.

The unemployment measure is the annual, nonseasonally adjusted estimates from the Current Population Survey (CPS) administered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Finally, I measure educational attainment by the percentage of residents aged 25 years and older with at least a baccalaureate degree. This variable comes from CPS annual estimates from 1995 to 2006 and from ACS 1-year estimates from 2007 to 2012.

Method

To examine the antecedents to state affirmative action bans, I employ discrete-time survival analysis. This is a type of event history analysis that is more appropriate when measuring changes over discrete time, such as years (Allison, 1982; Singer & Willett, 1993). This estimation technique uses survival analysis by identifying a risk set—states that have not yet adopted a ban but could—and then modeling how the likelihood for the risk set to adopt a ban, or the proportional hazard rate, changes as a function of key state-level covariates. This type of analysis involves adding time indicators for each year into a logistic regression. As an example, in the year 1996, 46 states would be part of the risk set; Alaska, Hawaii, and Texas were not part of the sample and California adopted a state affirmative action ban in

this year (refer to Table 1). As additional states adopted bans, the event history analysis collects more information to create estimates for how each variable influenced the proportional likelihood of adoption.

During the period considered in this study, eight states adopted a ban. When using logistic regression to model rare events, additional methodological steps need to be taken in order to minimize bias and precision concerns (King & Zeng, 2001). Following the suggestion of Allison (2012), the current study utilizes a penalized likelihood method to reduce the concerns about potential bias in the estimates produced by a logistic regression.

The model specification is

$$logit(h_{it}) = [\alpha_1 D_{1it} + \alpha_2 D_{2it} + \cdots + \alpha_{18} D_{18it}] + X_{it}\beta$$

where h_{it} is the instantaneous proportional hazard of adoption of a state affirmative action ban for state i in year t, a_{1-18} are estimates on the time indicators (from 1995 to 2012), and X_{it} represents a vector of state characteristics for state i in year t, including these characteristics: state percentage White, flagship percentage White, diffusion, direct democracy availability (= 1 if state allows either ballot initiatives or legislative referenda), direct democracy count, gubernatorial year (= 1 if it is a gubernatorial election year), liberal citizen ideology, unemployment, and attainment.

There is no evidence of detrimental multicollinearity in any of the models (variance inflation factors all less than 2.5). The linearity and proportionality assumptions were met for discrete-time survival analysis. I test for nonlinearity in the relationships between the outcome measures and variables included in the models. A limitation of this work is that the Nebraska state legislature is unicameral. Therefore, any attempt to analyze the partisan composition of state legislatures would remove Nebraska from the analysis (due to casewise deletion), and with only eight sample states ever adopting a ban, including Nebraska, power issues would emerge.

Results

Summary Statistics

Table 5 shows the mean, minimum, and maximum for the key state-level characteristics at the beginning, middle, and end of the analytical period (1995, 2004, and 2012). Focusing on the racial threat

factors, both the White share of the state's traditional college-going population (age 15–24) and the White share of undergraduate students attending the state flagship (single-year) are decreasing from the beginning to end of the analytical period. Turning to the policy characteristics of states, by 2012, the maximum number of geographic neighbors with a statewide affirmative action ban adopted is three though some states have zero. Approximately half of the states allowed for direct democracy measures in each of 3 years, though the number of initiatives differed depending on if the year is a presidential election year. Focusing on state demographic characteristics, the unemployment rate increased over time (though the 2012 percentage is down from the heights of the Great Recession). The liberal ideology average has not changed dramatically, though the minimum and maximum have become more extreme over time. Finally, the percentage of adults with a baccalaureate degree have increased though the state average in 2012 was still below 30%.

Main Analyses

Table 6 presents the results, which are discussed using the theoretical framework. Column 1 includes the state flagship enrollment as the single-year measure. Columns 2 and 3 include the state flagship enrollment as rolling averages, 3-year and 5-year measures, respectively. All estimates are presented as odds ratios. There is little difference in the estimates regardless of the number of years included in the state flagship enrollment measure. Taken together, the results provide support for Hypotheses 2 and 3, and weak evidence for Hypotheses 1, 4, and 6.

Racial Threat Factors (Hypotheses 1 and 2). Focusing on racial threat factors, I find mixed evidence. Hypothesis 1 posits that states with a smaller share of White college-age residents will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban. I find that, when controlling for the 3- or 5-year state flagship enrollment share, a 1 percentage point increase in the White share of college-age residents predicts between a 7% and 8% increase in the odds of ban adoption (marginal significance, $p < .10$). These estimates are sensitive to model specification as, when controlling for a single year of state flagship enrollment share, there is no statistical significance. However, I do find significant evidence for the percentage of students attending the state flagship institution who identify as White, which supports

Hypothesis 2 (states with fewer White students attending the state flagship institution will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban). A 1 percentage point increase in the number of White students attending state flagship institutions is associated with a 10% to 13% decrease in the odds of adopting a state ban. Therefore, a decline in the percentage of White students at the flagship institutions is associated with a state having higher odds of adopting a ban.

Figure 1 shows the estimated marginal influence of the single-year percentage of students attending the state flagship institution who identify as White. When 30% of a state's flagship institution's full-time, first-time undergraduate population is White, the predicted probability of adopting an affirmative action ban is 75%. When the percentage of White students increases to 60%, predicted probability of adoption is 19%. And once White students become 90% of the student body, the predicted probability of adoption for states is approximately 1%. This demonstrates the stark differences in probability of state adoption of affirmative action bans depending on the racial composition of enrollment at flagship universities.
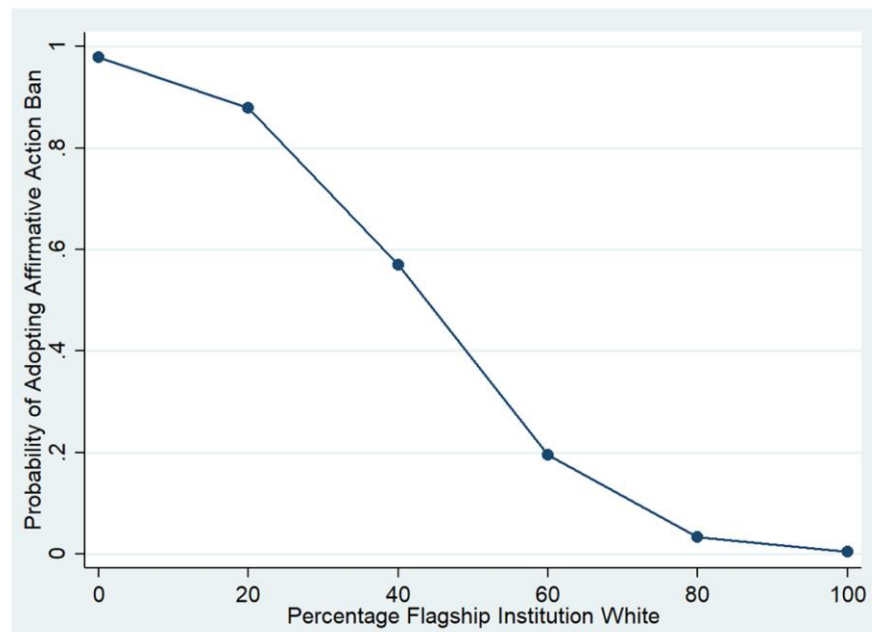
Figure 1. **Relationship between the predicted percentage of students enrolled at the state flagship institution (1-year) who identify as White with the probability of a state adopting an affirmative action ban.**

Policy Characteristics of States (Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5). Turning to the policy characteristics of states, regional diffusion has a statistically significant negative relationship with a state's likelihood of adopting a statewide affirmative action ban. This supports Hypothesis 3 (states that are geographically close to other states without affirmative action bans will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban). As more surrounding states adopt an affirmative action ban, the state of interest is less likely to do so. For example, if one additional regional state adopts an affirmative action ban, the odds that the state of interest adopts an affirmative action ban decrease by approximately 60% to 62%. I found partial, though weak, support for Hypothesis 4. States that allowed direct democracy also had higher odds of ban adoption (only two of the three specifications and only marginally statistically significant, $p < .10$). There was no evidence for a relationship between ban adoption and the number of direct democracy measures on the ballot or being a gubernatorial election year when controlling for the other characteristics (contrary to Hypotheses 4 and 5).

State Demographic Characteristics (Hypotheses 6 and 7). Hypothesis 6 posits that states with more conservative citizens will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban. The results show that increases in liberal citizen ideology are weakly associated with decreased odds of adopting an affirmative action ban (only in two specifications and with marginal significance, $p < .10$). A one-unit increase in liberal citizen ideology (which means that a state is becoming more liberal) is associated with a predicted less than 1% decrease in the odds of a state adopting an affirmative action ban. There was no evidence that the state unemployment or attainment rates predicted the odds of a state adopting an affirmative action ban (contrary to Hypothesis 7).

Sensitivity Analyses

To test whether the relationship between White undergraduate enrollment and ban adoption stemmed from flagship universities' racial composition or the general racial composition in the state's public higher education, I estimate the original models with varying sets of each state's public institution. First, to analyze the general higher education landscape, I estimate the full model, adding the percentage of full-time, first-time undergraduate students at all public 4-year institutions who identify as White in

each state. The all-public percentage is not statistically significant at conventional levels, whereas the flagship percentage retains its prior relationship. This appears to rule out the idea that it is the racial composition at all institutions that influences state affirmative action ban adoptions.

Second, to analyze if the relationship between higher education enrollment and ban adoption relies on the scarcity of access to enrolling in any selective public institution, I estimate the original full model, adding the percentage of full-time, first-time undergraduate students at Carnegie-classified doctoral research institutions who identify as White. Similar to the analysis for all public institutions, the models produce non–statistically significant estimates for Carnegie doctoral institutions' enrollment share measure and retain the prior relationship for the state flagship measure (statistically significant negative relationship). Therefore, there is evidence that the percentage of White first-time students at public flagship institutions does have an independent relationship with the odds of a state adopting an affirmative action ban. In addition, when I estimate the models *replacing* state flagship institution enrollment percentages with the share of White undergraduate students attending Carnegie doctoral institutions (instead of adding it to the prior models), the measure of White share of enrollment in higher education is inconsistently statistically significant at conventional levels (only one specification statistically significant at conventional levels). Coupling that with the variability in the number of Carnegie-classified doctoral research institutions in each state, I continue to focus on the state public flagship institutions identified by the prior literature. In all of the sensitivity analyses, the relationship between the racial/ethnic composition within the state and the likelihood of adoption of a statewide affirmative action ban remained qualitatively similar to the main results. This means that it is not the percentage of White students attending public higher education within a state that is associated with ban adoption, but instead the percentage of White students attending the most selective public institutions, such as state flagships.

In addition, I estimated the primary analysis models including Texas in the analytical sample. The share of White students attending the state flagship and regional diffusion estimates retain the relationship

shown in Table 6. Therefore, the findings for Hypotheses 2 and 3 are robust to the inclusion or exclusion of Texas.

Discussion

Prior research generally focused on investigating the effects of state affirmative action bans. This work fills a gap in this literature by investigating which state contexts have historically been more conducive to affirmative action ban adoption. The current analysis provides evidence that antecedents to state affirmative action ban adoptions include White students' share of the flagship institutions' enrollment and other states' prior policy decisions. Furthermore, there is credible support for the applicability of racial threat theory in understanding state affirmative action ban adoption, though the evidence comes through access to selective higher education instead of the overall voting population.

Hypothesis 2, that states with fewer White students attending the state public flagship institution will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban, is supported. Decreases in the percentage of White students at the state flagship are associated with higher odds of a state adopting an affirmative action ban. While not a causal relationship, this finding is still important due to its strength and the consistency of the finding through multiple sensitivity checks. The result emerges only when the percentage of White students decreases at selective public institutions, particularly the state flagship. This suggests that there is a scarce product, selective public higher education, which is in high demand. The analysis lends support to the theory of racial threat; namely, that the White population of the state, possibly feeling threatened by the dwindling number of enrollment spots for White students, reacts in a way that is negative for the minority population, by adopting a state affirmative action ban.

Hinrichs (2012) found evidence that enrollment of underrepresented minority students decreased at selective institutions after a race-based affirmative action ban was adopted. It would be logical to find such evidence as it appears that adoption of these bans is associated with the scarcity of access to selective public institutions for White students. Grodsky and Kalogrides (2008) found that admissions professionals at public institutions report using affirmative action more when the disparity between the college-age Black population in a state and the Black population served by colleges increases. Based on

the current analysis's findings, I posit that public institutions within states could use affirmative action more when Black disparities are larger (between Black residents and college students), which can create even more White disparities at the state flagships (between White residents and students attending the state flagships). This hypothetical relationship could exacerbate feelings of racial threat and increase the odds of ban adoption. In other words, White families could support or vote for an affirmative action ban to ensure that their children have better access to selective institutions and the benefits associated with attending them (Bowen et al., 2009; Melguizo, 2010).

This finding provides a theoretical contribution to the field as it offers support for the applicability of racial threat theory when analyzing the adoption of state affirmative action bans. Prior researchers have acknowledged that the usefulness of racial threat and racial climate in understanding policy adoption may require the stakeholders (citizens, voters, etc.) have a ''personal, localized [experience] with affirmative action'' (Campbell et al., 2006, p. 142). This conjecture appears to bear out based on the results of this analysis. When I operationalize racial threat as the share of undergraduate enrollment at the state public flagship, I find a consistent relationship between the share of White students and odds of ban adoption. I do not find the same consistent evidence when I operationalize racial threat as the share of White college-age residents. These two findings echo the results of the sensitivity analysis: Ban adoption is associated with the enrollment access available at the state public flagship, not simply the demand for higher education within the state. Therefore, determining the majority-minority dyad for operationalization of racial threat is critical when determining the applicability of the theory to different policy behaviors (in this instance, policy adoption).

In addition, the findings support Hypothesis 3, which posits that states that are geographically close to other states without affirmative action bans will be more likely to adopt a state affirmative action ban. Geographic diffusion is associated with lowered odds of a state adopting a state affirmative action ban. Potentially, states learned from their neighbors that there is a backlash when states adopt statewide affirmative action bans. This provides evidence supporting Li's (2017) finding of ''reverse policy diffusion.'' Policymakers and residents could have recognized the enrollment issues (Hinrichs, 2012;

Long, 2004) with state affirmative action bans and made decisions to avoid the same problems in their state institutions. This is supported by other evidence from Blume and Long (2014). States with no highly selective institutions neighboring a state with a ban had lowered levels of affirmative action (Blume & Long, 2014); there is potential that these states found no reason to adopt a ban as affirmative action use was decreasing regardless of policy decisions within the states.

The current analysis does not find consistent, strong support for Hypotheses 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The current study finds weak evidence supporting a relationship between state affirmative action ban adoption and the share of White college-age residents (1), the opportunity for direct democracy (4), and liberal citizen ideology (6). The study finds no evidence supporting a relationship with taste for direct democracy (4), gubernatorial election in the current year (5), or the levels of educational attainment (7). The lack of support for a relationship between White college-age residents and state affirmative action ban adoption highlights that the consistent relationship is actually between ban adoption and the share of White students attending the state public flagship. Additionally, contrary to prior research on policy adoption (e.g., same-sex marriage; Lewis, 2011), the ability for states to have ballot initiatives and legislative referenda did not consistently predict the states' likelihood of adopting a state affirmative action ban. The current analysis does not support the idea that direct democracy, when it comes to state affirmative active bans, is related to state affirmative action ban adoptions when controlling for other state characteristics. Therefore, the current analysis does not provide strong evidence supporting that direct democracy led to policy adoption that benefits the rights of the majority over the rights of the minority group.

Future research needs to be conducted to investigate the role of policy entrepreneurs (e.g., Ward Connerly) and policy intermediary organizations in the adoption of affirmative action bans nationwide. While in-depth analysis has occurred within states (e.g., Grodsky & Kurlaender, 2010), there has been little empirical research on the role individuals external to the traditional public policy space play in ban adoption. In addition, qualitative investigations of how the public and policymakers create their perceptions of enrollment opportunity at state public institutions would be valuable. The current quantitative analysis can highlight an association between White enrollment share and the odds of ban

adoption; it cannot shed light on the process that educates individuals on the White enrollment share. It is

unlikely that the public, and to a lesser extent all state legislators or the governor, know the exact

enrollment shares of different racial/ethnic student groups. Similar to this finding, Grodsky and

Kalogrides (2008) found states with independent governors were associated with higher odds of

institutions' admissions professionals reporting the use of affirmative action (similar relationship for

Democratic governors and professionals at private institutions). However, there is not clear research

explaining the mechanisms that lead to this relationship. In both cases, this could be a potential role that

policy entrepreneurs or policy intermediary organizations played in policy adoption. Therefore, more

research is needed to understand the mechanisms and processes that inform these larger constituent

groups about enrollment share figures.

Conclusion

Overall, this analysis supports the identification of racial threat and geographic policy diffusion as

policy antecedents for adoption of state affirmative action bans. Fears that affirmative action bans may be

a reaction to a perception of increased minority rights do not appear to be groundless. The current

research finds no strong evidence of a relationship between the opportunity for, or number of, ballot

initiatives or legislative referenda. However, it does present evidence that shifts in the share of White

undergraduate students at the state public flagships are associated with ban adoption. While the

appropriateness of racial threat is unclear for all phenomena, racial threat appears to be an applicable

theory in understanding the antecedents to state affirmative action ban adoption.

I find evidence that state affirmative action bans may be a punitive action of the dominant group

to secure access to a scarce commodity, an education at the state flagship institution. Based on the results,

residents of states appear to identify most strongly with their state flagship institution when considering

ban adoption. This is a critical distinction in the field's understanding of the politics of affirmative action

as prior research has generally focused on all 4-year public institutions or all selective 4-year public

institutions. The robust relationship between the public flagship institution and statewide affirmative

action ban adoption across the United States provides scholars and political stakeholders with a clearer

understanding of which institutions within higher education likely influence individual's perceptions of affirmative action bans. This relationship, therefore, needs to be taken into consideration in future research focused on investigating why and how affirmative action bans are adopted. Furthermore, this work provides additional evidence for negative policy diffusion as a theoretical concept, where states learn what policies not to adopt from their geographic neighbors. Specifically focusing on statewide affirmative action bans, the evidence suggests that states learn from their neighbors with bans that adoption of a ban may not be beneficial for the states' goals.

Political actors involved in affirmative action policymaking, whether for or against, would benefit from incorporating information about state context into strategic decisions. In particular, the current study demonstrates how the demographic composition of the state flagship institution and geographic neighbors' policy decisions have both historically predicted affirmative action policy. To the extent that the political dynamics producing these statistical relationships are the same moving forward, these policy antecedents may be useful heuristics for identifying state contexts that may be amenable to political work related to affirmative action bans. The current research is only the start of investigations into the policy antecedents of state affirmative action ban adoption. As of this writing, in an increasingly tense political climate (particularly with regards to race/ethnicity), there has been intensifying national conflict over race-based affirmative action (e.g., Green et al., 2018). If a similar animus toward race-based affirmative action is occurring within states, then the findings of this study could be applicable. States with larger disparities between the share of White college-age residents and White college students at the flagship institution and with fewer geographic neighbors with bans could be seen as fertile grounds for race-based affirmative action bans. As outlined above, future work should focus on how political stakeholders learn of these key state contextual factors (through quantitative and qualitative methods), which can further the field's and policy stakeholders' understanding of the facets, and potential causal nature, of the relationship between state contexts and affirmative action ban adoption. However, decisions about the feasibility of different strategies for the adoption of state bans can be better informed by the foundations set in this initial inquiry.

Taken together, these findings are troubling as prior research has shown that states with affirmative action bans have lower enrollment of underrepresented minority students and fewer opportunities for all students to participate in intergroup interactions. In addition, race-neutral alternatives do not appear able to replicate the outcomes of race-based affirmative action. Therefore, this policy adoption, which occurs concurrently with decreased shares of White student enrollment at the state flagship, has real, material costs for underrepresented racial/ethnic minority students.

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