

THE ROLE OF STATUS IN SUPPORT FOR PUNITIVE POLICIES

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Political Science, Concentration American Politics.

Chapel Hill  
2016

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## ABSTRACT

APURBA CHAKRABORTY: The Role of Status in Support for Punitive Policies  
(Under the direction of Pamela Conover.)

There exists strong evidence for the proposition that individual psychological dispositions, social attitudes and environmental conditions predict support for punitive *criminal* punishments. Less work has been done to examine which factors predict support for punitive punishments outside of the criminal context. I argue that when an individual's high or low within-group status is made salient, they will express greater support for punitive policies punishing a disfavored out-group. A test of this theory is conducted and findings are presented.

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## INTRODUCTION

Public officials in the United State are constantly under pressure from their constituents to identify "deserving" and "undeserving" members of society by devising "punitive, punishment oriented policies for negatively constructed groups" because the public likes these policies (Schneider and Ingram 1993, p.334). There is no dearth of evidence to support this proposition. In fact, it is clear that punitive policies have been embedded into the heart of today's political and cultural debates.

In New York, for example, a state senator recently introduced a bill which would prevent Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries from purchasing steak and lobster with their benefits.<sup>1</sup> In Maine, the Mayor of Lewiston has encouraged the state's legislature to pass a bill which would put the names and addresses of welfare recipients on the internet so that anyone could view their status.<sup>2</sup> Kansas just ended a chapter of political upheaval where only the threat of lost federal funding defeated the implementation of a law which would impose significant ATM fees on welfare recipients by limiting daily withdrawal amounts.<sup>3</sup> Anti-sodomy laws remain on the books in places like Louisiana despite being unambiguously declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court; and as of the time of this writing, "bathroom bills" requiring transgendered individuals to use the bathroom of their birth sex are dominating the news cycle.

But why do people support these policies? There has been much research that has studied support for punitive *criminal* policies, which has revealed that this support can be

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/02/23/republican-lawmaker-wants-to-ban-welfare-recipients-from-buying-steak-and-lobster/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.twincitytimes.com/columns/enough-is-enough-mainers-have-a-right-to-know-how-their-money-is-spent>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/article23312670.html>

explained by a combination of individual psychological qualities of an individual, social attitudes and environmental factors. Specifically, the relevant individual psychological dispositions are Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), contempt and empathy. Individuals high in SDO and likely to express contempt are more likely to support Punitive Policies while individuals likely to express empathy are less likely to support the same policies (Sidanius, Mitchell, Haley and Navarrete 2006; Horberg, Oveis and Keltner 2011; Gault and Sabini 2000). Support for Punitive Policies can also have an implicit or explicit racial component, with those individuals expressing higher racial resentment being more likely to disapprove of policies they think disproportionately help minorities (Gilens 2009). With respect to punitive criminal policies, environmental factors influence evaluations of policy. For example, the increased salience of the prison-industrial complex (Christie, 2000; Dyer, 2000) and the war on drugs (Tonry, 1995; Mauer, 1999) can increase an individual's support for harsher criminal penalties.

While this research has been both instructive and important due to the rise in punitive public sentiment and the reflection of that sentiment in criminal policy over the latter part of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st, that trend appears to have abated. Politicians' use of public declarations of support for punitive *social* policies, on the other hand, shows no such signs. As such, it is important to gain insight into when the public might be more responsive to such appeals.

I contend that feelings of status are important in this explanation. When an individual is not thinking about status, the individual's attitudes toward punitive social policies which target disfavored social groups (hereinafter referred to simply as "Punitive Policies" ) will be explained by *who* they are (personality disposition, emotional proclivities, etc.). When they are *actively* considering their within-group status, additional cognitive processes related to the maintenance of self-regard are activated. Importantly, whether an individual is thinking about their high in-group status or their low in-group status, they will evaluate a Punitive Policy more favorably, although for different reasons. Individuals thinking about their high-status are motivated to create an image of their in-group that is more favorable in comparison to the disfavored social group made a target of the Punitive Policy. Individuals

thinking about how they have low-status will support the policy because they see the policy as information reflecting acceptance and respect from their own in-group.

If the evidence is consistent, this theory could help answer a number of questions political scientists have been pondering for some time. For example, in the book *What's the Matter With Kansas?*, author Thomas Frank attempted to answer the question of why members of a low-status group (less wealthy, less educated, white residents of Kansas) and a high-status group (highly educated, wealthy residents of Kansas) voted for the same political party (the Republican party) despite the fact that Republican policies only economically benefited the latter group (Frank 2007). Frank concluded that social issues such as abortion were more important to the former group but it is possible that the Republican party's platform contained more Punitive Policies and were therefore attractive to both groups.

Taken more generally, this theory could be used to predict and explain political behavior when conditions change so that status becomes chronically salient for large numbers of group members. Individuals may be motivated to derogate out-group members to preserve group superiority or to seek acceptance from other in-group members. In doing so, they may support politicians or parties who advocate Punitive Policies.

In the following paper, I outline the psychological processes individuals use to form attitudes toward Punitive Policies. I will detail why high and low status individuals will evaluate these policies more positively. Finally, I present an experiment testing this theory and I discuss the findings.

### **The Process of Attitude Formation toward Punitive Policies**

If group concerns are salient, individuals develop attitudes toward the group-related policies in a specific manner. Group concerns are made salient when a policy is phrased in specific group terms (let us punish this group) and the groups are salient (Conover 1988). When evaluating Punitive Policies, assume that the groups themselves matter to the public. That is, when evaluating public policies, individuals are very likely to use attitudes toward the groups affected in order to evaluate the policy itself (Nelson and Kinder 1996) and



it would not be politically expedient for politicians to suggest punishment for groups the public has never heard of or does not care about.

The process of evaluating policies when groups are salient is a three step process that involves (1) the perceivers taking note of the target of the policy; (2) the perceivers choosing which of their social identities they will take on in order to evaluate the policy; and (3) the perceivers making an evaluation of the policy (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy and Flament 1971). In the evaluation of Punitive Policies, one factor dictates the intensity of this evaluation: the importance of the group in which the perceivers place themselves; and one factor will cause the individual to evaluate the Punitive Policy less favorably: the ability of the individuals to place cognitive distance between themselves and the target group.

In order to understand how distance, importance and status affect evaluation of Punitive Policies, it is important to discuss in more detail how attitudes toward group-based policies are formed.

#### *The Target of the Punitive Policy Drives a Perceiver's choice of Self-Identified Group*

Individuals evaluating Punitive Policies may believe that their analysis is dispassionate but political behavior operates within the context of certain underlying psychological motivations. Key to this discussion is the desire to construct one's self positively (Heine, Lehman, Markus and Kitayama 1999).

When individuals evaluate a punitive policy, they start from the position that the negatively constructed group punished is a "low-status," undeserving group. "Punishment" can be defined as a negative sanction intentionally applied to someone perceived to have violated a law, rule, norm or expectation (Vidmar and Miller 1980). We tend to evaluate group-based policies on the deservingness or undeservingness of the groups identified for the treatment proposed (Jensen and Petersen 2016). So the out-group being punished is the basis for the group perceivers choose. In order to maintain positive self-regard, then, the initial cognitive process perceivers undertake is the process of placing themselves in an in-group that is more positively regarded than the out-group of the punished.

The need to place cognitive distance between one's in-group and out-group is powerful and automatic (Rabbie and Horwitz 1969; Tajfel et al. 1971). In experimental settings, individuals assigned to groups that have no meaning outside the context of the experiment have been observed to choose outcomes where they receive less money just to ensure that the difference in amount received by the in-group and the out-group is greater (Lemyre and Smith 1985). Individuals have many group associations from which to choose when they undertake this process. To create cognitive distance they will define themselves in terms of the in-group that minimizes intragroup differences and maximizes intergroup differences (Oakes 1987; Oakes, Turner and Haslam 1991).

When evaluating Punitive Policies, the comparison out-group is chosen for the perceivers by the party presenting the policy. The reason the perceivers choose the in-group which will serve as a comparison to the punished out-group which is furthest from that out-group is to minimize the need to moderate their desires regarding punishment for the out-group. The greater the distance, the less likely the punishment will fall back upon the perceivers. It maintains self-regard for an individual to think of themselves as being part of a group that is much better than the group designated as being a violator of social norms. To be clear, the act of being able to create cognitive distance between the target of the policy and one's own comparison group will make it more likely that the policy will be evaluated positively (Lemyre and Smith 1985; Oakes and Turner 1980; Rubin and Hewstone 1998).

Different individuals place different levels of importance on the groups of which they are a part and this influences their behavior. For example, people who identify with religious groups are not necessarily more hostile toward other religious groups. People who identify with religious groups *and* who place great importance in this group association, on the other hand, *are* more likely to be hostile toward other religious groups (Struch and Schwartz 1989). Individuals who place great importance in a group identity are also more likely to think that their group is getting less than they deserve (Gurr 1970) which is important because this feeling of being "short-changed" tends to motivate perceivers to take action (Olson, Herman and Zanna 2014).

Taken together, and taking note of the importance of affect in the evaluative process,

these findings leads to two predictions:

Hypothesis One: The greater the cognitive distance an individual is able to place between their in-group and the target of the Punitive Policy, the more positive the attitude the individual will express toward that policy.

Hypothesis Two: The greater importance the perceiver places in their membership in the group through which they choose to perceive the Punitive Policy, the greater the interaction between attitude and status.

### *The Role of Status in Evaluations of Punitive Policies*

Individual motivations are guided by the need to view one's self in a positive light. This positive self-regard can and does come from membership in a higher status group that is construed positively relative to disfavored out-groups, but status within groups is also important.

Status within a group is associated with the concept of group prototypes. As stated earlier, individuals acting as group members would like to see themselves and other group members as interchangeable reflections of the ideal, but groups are not made up of homogeneous members. Often, group membership is based upon the possession of only one or two minimal characteristics; but certain members resemble the group more than others. Group prototypes have been defined in multiple ways, but the meanings are similar in practice. A prototype is either a person who possesses characteristics who "best" describe members of the group (Hogg and Hains 1996) or a person who most closely resembles a fictional group member who embodies the most common or frequent characteristics of the group (Roach, Lloyd, Wiles and Rosch 1978). Both definitions fundamentally describe an "average" group member. Holding all else constant a prototypical member of a group receives an average amount of self-regard from their membership in the group.

There do exist members of groups that possess all the characteristics of a prototype but are higher on dimensions of positive evaluation or who possess more desirable characteristics than the prototype. There are also individuals who lack many of the characteristics of

a group prototype but are still considered members of the group. The positive self-regard that these individuals receive from group membership are different and their concerns are different as well. These processes suggest that individuals who significantly deviate from the prototype will evaluate Punitive Policies differently than someone for whom status is not salient.

In a high school basketball team, for example, most of the players are of similar quality and can be considered the prototype. But some members of the teams might be stars. They may warrant local or even national media coverage. They benefit from their team membership far more than the prototype. Other team members may be "benchwarmers." These individuals get to practice with the team and wear a letterman's jacket, but they are constantly beset with concerns that other members of the team do not really consider them valuable or even "real" members of the team and that other people may not even recognize that they are group members. Their major concern is getting the minimal psychological benefit that group membership confers.

### *High-Status Group Members*

High-status members of high-status groups benefit more than other members of groups from their in-group membership (Crocker, Thompson, McGraw and Ingerman 1987; Crocker and McGraw 1984; Austin and Worchel 1986; Long and Spears 1998). Derogation of an out-group increases collective self-esteem (Branscombe and Wann 1994). Punitive Policies symbolically designate target groups as violative of group norms. If a Punitive Policy is implemented it means that society agrees that the punished group is bad and lowers the possibility that the punished group can improve in status relative to the high-status individual's in-group. This is important to the perceivers because they derive so much positive affect from their group membership. It is reasonable to predict:

Hypothesis Three: High-status members of groups will evaluate Punitive Policies more positively than group members for whom status is not salient.

### *Low-Status Group Members*

To understand why Punitive Policies might appeal to low-status group members, it is first important to discuss the status restorative qualities of punishment. While most view punishment as a response to a specific act, the concept is actually much broader. Punishment, as stated above, is a negative sanction intentionally applied to someone perceived to have violated a law, rule, norm or expectation (Vidmar and Miller 1980). The policies mentioned in the introduction and policies like them are punitive. They are negative sanctions and they are supported by individuals who see the target groups as being offenders of their expectations. For example, recipients of government aid might violate some people's expectations that Americans are supposed to be self-reliant. Many of today's political conflicts involving moral issues implicate punitive laws. Forcing transgendered individuals to use bathrooms that do not correspond to their sex can be construed as a negative sanction as it frequently places them in danger of physical harm. These laws almost certainly arise from offense at the violation of norms related to traditional gender roles.

Punishment is related to many psychological processes. Seeing offenders punished is psychologically satisfying as it symbolically reasserts society's morals (Durkheim 1964; Tyler and Boeckmann 1997). This is because the violation itself is harmful to an individual's status and self-worth. Witnessing the violation of social rules sends a message to individuals that they are not valued by the wrongdoer and, possibly, the group with which they identify, because if they were valued members then the group would take action to rectify their status loss (Tyler and Boeckmann 1997). This is critical because individuals are always looking for information that they are accepted by their in-group and are disturbed by information that they are not (Tyler 1989; Cartwright and Zander 1953; Schachter 1951).

Research has shown that status loss occurs when an offense has been directed at a person (Okimoto 2008; Okimoto and Wenzel 2011). Failure by group decision makers to use fair procedures or to address wrongs causes the victim to perceive themselves as being unvalued group members. This effect is particularly acute when membership in the group is important (Tyler, DeGoey and Smith 1996). Groups can take action to alleviate these feelings of status insecurity. Material compensation for an individual facing unjust treatment has been found

to have this effect (Okimoto 2008). Likewise, the in-group's punishment of the perpetrator of an offense against an individual has also been found to alleviate group-status related concerns (Okimoto and Wenzel 2011).

If individuals are constantly seeking information not only that they are members of a valued in-group, but also that the in-group values and accepts them as being prototypical group members, two things are likely. First, witnessing violations of the rules, morals, norms, etc. of the group go unpunished sends a signal to the individual that the in-group does not share the same ideals, which then causes the individual to realize that they are further away from the prototype than they previously believed. This will result in a loss of status. "If the in-group does not share my values, am I really part of the group? Do they value my opinions?" Second, punishment of the offender will restore the status of the individual, as it reaffirms the notion that the in-group shares the same values as the individual and causes the individual to see themselves as more prototypical. As such, I predict:

Hypothesis Four: Low status members of groups will evaluate Punitive Policies more positively than group members for whom status is not salient.

## **Method**

### *Materials and Procedures*

Students were sent an internet link to a Qualtrics Software survey. After signing in, students were sent to an opening screen which explained that the students were completing a long-standing survey. The opening survey is shown as Fig. 1.

This introduction primed the importance of being a group member of University of North Carolina community and suggests to the participants that the prototypical University of North Carolina student scores about average on this test but that doing well on this test is a positive.



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL

Dear Student:

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey. Your input is invaluable to the Career Center. This survey is known as the North Carolina Career Assessment Survey (N.C.C.A.S.). You will first be asked to fill out basic demographic information and then complete a personality survey that has been conducted by the University of North Carolina's Career Center since 1966. The Career Center keeps this information in order to understand the distribution of personality traits in the student body. Various departments in the University have used the information contained in this survey for a number of tasks including tailoring course offerings for students, making decisions about housing expansions and improving student advising.

For those individuals who choose to allow the Career Center to track participants, the results of this survey have been strongly associated with success after graduation. Students who have scored highly on the personality assessment have ended up in prestigious careers and have earned higher salaries. Participants have traditionally chosen to opt in to allow the Career Center to collect personal information for this tracking. Nobody at the Career Center itself will ever view the results of this survey in connection with your name. A third party is used to blindly merge tracking information with test results. You will be given the opportunity to opt in to allow such tracking after seeing your results. No identifying information is currently being recorded.

Thank you for your participation,  
University of North Carolina Career Services Office  
University of North Carolina Dean of Students Office

I have read and understand these instructions

Next >>

Fig. 1: Survey Instruction Screen

## *Participants*

109 students enrolled in Introduction to Government at The University of North Carolina were recruited to participate in this experiment. The students were required to take part in this survey or complete a research paper. The average age of the participants was 19.2 years old. 46 of the students were male and 63 were female. The sample was primarily white, with 86 students self-identifying as such. There were 5 African American students in the sample, 7 Latinos, 4 Asian students and 7 who chose not to identify their race.

## *Measures*

Respondents were then given a series of statements and asked to express their level of agreement with following options: (1) Strongly disagree (2) Moderately disagree (3) Slightly disagree (4) Neither agree nor disagree (5) Slightly agree (6) Moderately agree; and (7) Strongly agree. These statements measured the following personality dispositions and emotional traits:

### Social Dominance Orientation:

Social Dominance Orientation is a personality trait identified by Sidanius & Pratto which measures an individual's desire for there to be inequality between groups and has been shown to predict support of punitive criminal policies (Sidanius et al. 2006). This measure was tested with seven statements such as "Sometimes violence is necessary to put other groups of people in their place." Certain statements were reverse coded and all scores were added to create an index with a minimum possible score of 7 and a maximum possible score of 49. The specific statements appear in Appendix B. A distribution of student SDO scores is shown in Figure 2.

### Racial Resentment:

Racial resentment is a way of describing attitudes toward racial minorities, generally African Americans, which encompasses the idea that their lack of success is not a result of structural problems but their own qualities. Respondents were asked to state agreement with two phrases adopted from the *The Symbolic Racism 2000* scale (Henry and Sears 2002).



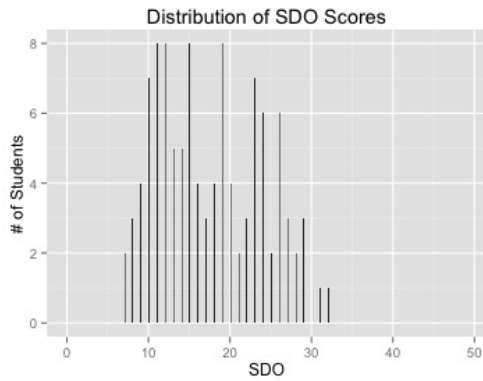


Fig. 2: SDO Distribution

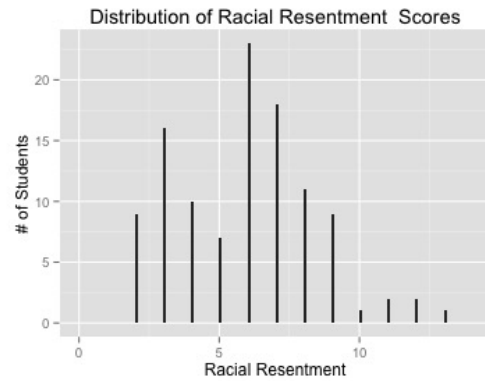


Fig. 3: Racial Resentment Distribution

The phrases are "Most blacks who receive scholarship money could get along without if they tried" and "over the past few years blacks have gotten less than they deserve (reverse coded)." These responses were added together to create an index with a minimum value of 2 and a maximum value of 14. A distribution of student racial resentment scores is shown in Figure 3.

Empathy & Contempt:

Emotions exist in both "state" and "trait" forms (Zelenski and Larsen 2000). State emotions are temporary feelings of emotion. An individual dealing with the sickness of a loved one is likely to be feeling sadness at the time. Their state could be described as "sad." This experience of emotion is not necessarily permanent, however. The recovery of that loved one or the passage of time could ameliorate these feelings. A trait, on the other hand, is an individual's general disposition toward feeling particular emotions and is an individual difference. Certain people feel elevated levels of anger or outrage or happiness all the time.

Traits empathy and contempt are predictive of support for punitive criminal policies (Gault and Sabini 2000; Horberg, Oveis and Keltner 2011). The statements used for measuring both emotional traits are contained in Appendix B and, like with SDO and racial resentment, were presented in a format of strongly disagree to strongly agree, reverse coded accordingly, and added to create an index. The empathy index consisted of five questions while the contempt index consisted of three questions. The empathy statements were taken from a scale developed by Dr. Mark Davis at the University of Texas at Austin (Davis 1983)

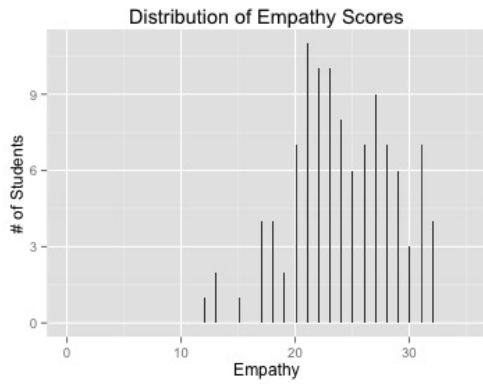


Fig. 4: Empathy Distribution

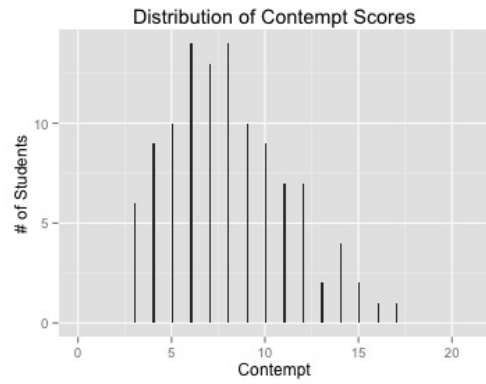


Fig. 5: Contempt Distribution

and the trait contempt statements were taken from a scale developed by Dr. John Crowley at Colorado State University (Crowley 2013). The empathy scale has a possible range of 5 through 35 and the contempt scale has a possible range of 3 through 21. Distributions of student empathy and contempt scores are shown in Figures 4 and 5, respectively.

Group Importance:

Group importance is predictive of influencing group-based attitudes and is measured by the question "How likely is it that you will maintain strong connections with members of the University of North Carolina community after graduating?" Participants were given the following options: (1) Very likely (2) Likely (3) Neither likely nor unlikely (4) Unlikely; or (5) Very Unlikely. These responses were then reverse coded so that the most positive response (Very likely) appears as a 5 and the least positive response (Very unlikely) appears as a 1. The distribution of Group Importance scores are shown in Figure 6.

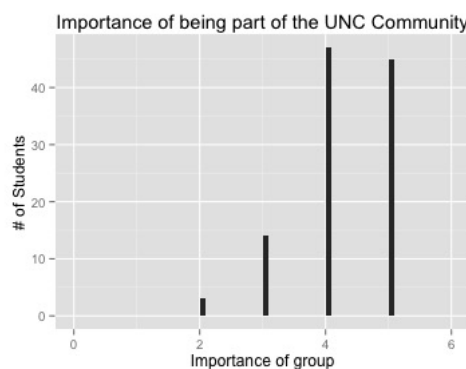


Fig. 6: Group Importance

Table 1 presents the summary statistics for responses for Social Dominance Orientation, Racial Resentment, Empathy, Contempt and Group Importance.

*Table 1: Summary Statistics for Individual Level Differences*

	SDO	RR	Empathy	Contempt	Group Importance
Median	17	6	24	8	4
Mean	17.50	5.90	24.07	8.05	4.23
Minimum	7	2	12	3	2
Maximum	32	13	32	17	5
Variance	40.72	6.15	20.38	10.28	0.60
Standard Deviation	6.38	2.48	4.51	3.21	0.78

### *Manipulation*

In order to manipulate feelings of status, students were randomly placed in either a control condition, a "high status" condition or a "low status" condition. Students placed in the control condition were simply thanked for completing the survey. Students placed in the "high status" condition were presented with results of the "assessment" indicating that they scored near the 90th percentile amongst all students, students of their sex, students in their major and students of their same race. These results were accompanied by graphs of score distribution which were intended to provide a visual representation of how few individuals "scored" higher than the subject. Students placed in the low status condition were presented with similar results except that their scores were around the 20th percentile and the graphs emphasized that they performed more poorly than almost everyone else who took the assessment. Examples of the charts shown to students appear in Appendix A.

### *Dependent Variables*

After being subjected to one of the three treatment conditions the students were asked to provide their opinions on eight separate policies which could be implemented at the University of North Carolina. These policies are set up in a 2X3 design intended to test hypotheses on punishment as well as target groups. The students were asked to evaluate policies the University of North Carolina was considering adopting with regards to three separate subjects: alcohol, the University honor code and the University's treatment of African American student affairs. Students were asked if they would: (1) strongly oppose, (2) oppose, (3) neither oppose nor favor, (4) favor or (5) strongly favor the University's adoption of the policies. Responses were reverse coded so that the highest level of support for a policy is a 5 and the lowest level of support is a 1. For each subject, one punitive policy was presented and one non-punitive (essentially administrative) policy was presented. The wording of the policies evaluated appear in Appendix C.

The non-Punitive Policies serve primarily as distractors. There is no reason to believe that any of the individual personality characteristics of students should systematically predict support for any of the policies. The targets of the Punitive policies were chosen carefully. In day to day life, individuals choose which of their social identities they will adopt when evaluating Punitive Policies. They will choose the social identity which places the greatest cognitive distance from the target group. Without control of which group the subjects use there would be no way of measuring the distance between the target group and the identity chosen. By priming the importance of the students' membership in the University community, I can dictate the distance between the perceiver and the target group. For the alcohol violation, it is assumed that at least some of these students, being college students, drink alcohol and consider the use of alcohol morally acceptable. In evaluating the policy, it is expected that students would have some difficulty placing distance between themselves and the people who could be punished by the policy because, in many cases, they *themselves* could be subject to the policy. We expect that students on average would be less able to feel good about themselves as UNC Students who do not drink because many of them do.

It is predicted that these students would have a slightly easier time distancing themselves from violators of the University Honor Code. While it is always possible that a student can inadvertently plagiarize due to extreme carelessness or somehow be put in a situation where they could be in danger of committing a violation, it is expected that it would be easier for an individual to place themselves in a group of "moral" or "good" or "honest" UNC students and distance themselves from the dishonest, poor moral quality students who might be subject to punishment.

Finally, the policy targeting African Americans was chosen to involve a target group which is furthest away from the reference group. For all individuals that are not African American, they could never be influenced by the policy. African Americans, on the other hand, could not place themselves cognitively far away from the target group.

As such, I removed the African American students from the sample in order to create maximum cognitive distance between the perceivers of the policy and the groups subjected to the policies punitive consequences and to make sure all of the analysis is done with the same sample. This provides for a final N of 104.

*Table 2: Summary of Policies Evaluated by Students*

Policy Subject	Non-Punitive	Punitive
Alcohol	Policy A	Policy D
Honor Code	Policy B	Policy E
African American Affairs	Policy C	Policy F

### *Model*

For each of the six policies evaluated, the following regression was run:

$$\text{Support for policy} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 (X_1 * X_7) + \beta_9 (X_2 * X_7) + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Where:

$X_1$  = High status treatment

$X_2$  = Low status treatment

$X_3$  = Social Dominance Orientation

$X_4$  = Racial Resentment

$X_5$  = Trait Empathy

$X_6$  = Trait Contempt

$X_7$  = Group Importance

The importance of group membership has an interactive influence upon evaluations of policy (see, e.g. Struch *et. al.* 1989). As such, importance of group membership was interacted with both high and low status treatments.

For Hypothesis One to be true,  $\beta_{0-Alcohol}$  ;  $\beta_{0-Honor}$  ;  $\beta_{0-Af.Am.}$

For Hypothesis Two to be true, for each of the policies I expect a positive and significant interaction between Group Importance and both the High and Low Status conditions (the  $\beta_8$  and  $\beta_9$  coefficients).

For Hypothesis Three to be true I expect a positive and significant coefficient for the  $\beta_1$  values in each regression.

For Hypothesis Four to be true I expect a positive and significant coefficient for the  $\beta_2$  values in each regression.

## Results

Table 3 presents the results for the regressions run on the non-Punitive Policies. I do not expect any significant results and I do not find any significant results.

Table 3: Support for Non-Punitive Policies

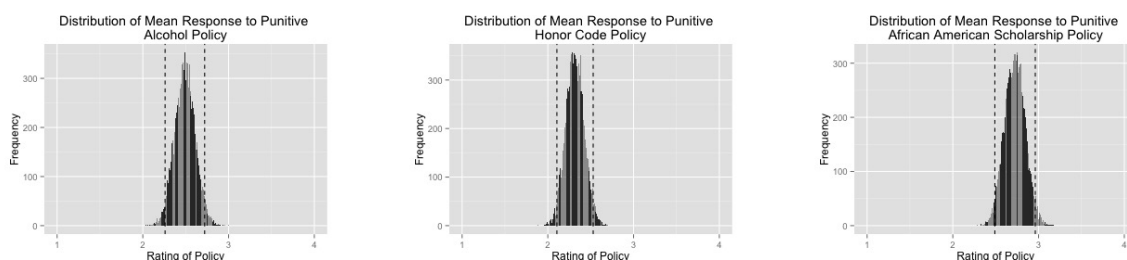
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Alcohol	Honor Code	Af. American
	(1)	(2)	(3)
High Status	-0.700 (1.400)	-0.270 (1.300)	-1.800 (1.100)
Low Status	1.600 (1.200)	0.340 (1.200)	-1.100 (0.960)
Group Importance	0.350 (0.230)	0.013 (0.220)	-0.130 (0.180)
Social Dominance Orientation	0.030 (0.021)	0.011 (0.020)	0.033* (0.017)
Racial Resentment	0.026 (0.052)	-0.028 (0.050)	-0.034 (0.041)
Empathy	0.030 (0.028)	-0.001 (0.026)	0.028 (0.022)
Contempt	0.028 (0.034)	0.022 (0.032)	-0.021 (0.027)
High Status * Group Importance	0.240 (0.320)	0.071 (0.300)	0.340 (0.250)
Low Status *	-0.320	-0.088	0.180

In order to test Hypothesis One, I need to show that the mean evaluation for the Honor Code policy is greater than the mean evaluation for the Alcohol policy and the mean evaluation for the African American Scholarship policy is greater than the mean evaluation for the Honor Code policy. In order to conduct this analysis, an additional step need be taken because while we have mean evaluations for each policy, which gives us a point estimate, we do not have any idea about the uncertainty contained in the data. Mean approval for the Punitive Policies regarding alcohol, the honor code and the African American scholarship were 2.51, 2.28 and 2.67 respectively. To create a confidence interval around these means I conducted a nonparametric bootstrapping simulation. This allows me to analyze whether the differences in means were more or less likely to be a result of random chance or whether they are true differences.

The bootstrapping process was conducted as follows:

1. I created a new data set of 104 students sampled randomly with replacement from the data set from the sample.
2. I ran the regressions listed in the model for the three Punitive Policies
3. I calculated the mean approval of the policy for the 104 students in the simulated sample

Figure 7 and Table 4 shwow the simulated mean responses from these samples including the 95 percent confidence intervals of the true value of the mean, with the process repeated 10,000 times.



*Fig. 7: Simulated Policy Approvals for Punitive Policies*



Table 4: Simulated Support for Policies

Policy	Quantile			—	Raw Experimental Data
	2.5	50	97.5		
Alcohol	2.26	2.49	2.72	—	2.51
Honor Code	2.11	2.31	2.53	—	2.28
Af. Am. Scholarship	2.49	2.72	2.96	—	2.67

In order to determine whether the approvals for each policy are different, I calculated the difference in means for each of the 10,000 simulations. The results of these simulations are shown graphically and in table form in Figure 8 and Table 5.

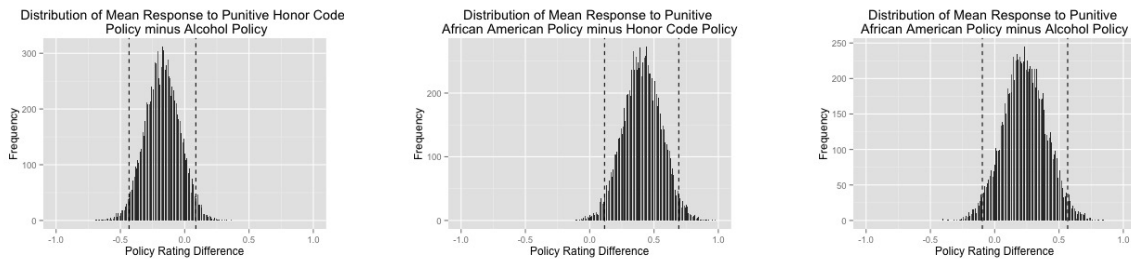


Fig. 8: Differences between Policy Approvals

Table 5: Simulated Support for Policies

Policy	Quantile		
	2.5%	50%	97.5%
Honor Code - Alcohol	-0.43	-0.17	0.09
Af.Am. - Honor Code	0.12	0.40	0.69
Af.Am. - Alcohol	-0.10	0.23	0.57

The result of this analysis is to show that support for adopting the Alcohol policy was actually greater than support for adopting the Honor Code policy in most of the simulations, although since zero falls within the 95% confidence interval I cannot say there is a significant difference between the two. Zero does not fall within the 95% confidence interval for adoption of the Punitive Policy increasing the difficulty of maintaining a scholarship for African Americans minus the adoption of the Honor Code policy. I also cannot say there is a significant difference between support for the African American Scholarship policy

and the Alcohol policy but the vast majority of the simulations showed that support for the African American Scholarship policy was greater than that over the Alcohol Policy.

Table 6 shows the results for the regressions run with Punitive Policies as the dependent variables. Hypothesis Two predicts that the coefficients for the High Status \* Group Importance and the Low Status \* Group Importance variables are positive and significant. None of these variables were significant, with only the interaction between Group Importance and High Status being close to significance for the Punitive Policy regarding Scholarships for African Americans.

Hypothesis Three predicts that the coefficients for the High Status condition for all three policies will be positive and significant. None of these coefficients were significant but the sign was correct on both the Alcohol Policy and the Honor Code policy.

Hypothesis Four predicts that the coefficients for the Low Status condition for all three policies will also be positive and significant. None of these coefficients were significant but the direction was correct for both the Alcohol and the African American Scholarship policies.

In examining the remaining variables we would expect that Social Dominance Orientation would have a significant and positive sign for all Punitive Policies and while the signs are correct, there are no significant results. We would expect individuals who harbor greater racial resentment to be more supportive of punishing African Americans and this result is positive and significant, with each additional point on the racial resentment scale increasing support for the policy by .26. Empathy is predicted to reduce support for Punitive Policies and while the signs are in the correct direction, the coefficients are not significant. Finally, trait contempt is predicted to increase support for Punitive Policies but it actually shows a significant negative correlation with the Alcohol policy and while its effect on the remaining two policies is not significant the sign is in the opposite direction from the expected.

Table 6: Support for Punitive Policies

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Alcohol (1)	Honor Code (2)	Af. American (3)
High Status	1.500 (1.900)	0.510 (1.700)	-1.800 (1.600)
Low Status	1.400 (1.600)	-1.600 (1.500)	0.510 (1.400)
Group Importance	-0.160 (0.310)	-0.180 (0.280)	0.009 (0.260)
Social Dominance Orientation	0.031 (0.028)	0.007 (0.026)	0.005 (0.024)
Racial Resentment	-0.007 (0.069)	-0.037 (0.063)	0.260*** (0.058)
Empathy	-0.011 (0.037)	-0.050 (0.033)	-0.004 (0.031)
Contempt	-0.075* (0.045)	-0.031 (0.041)	-0.048 (0.038)
High Status * Group Importance	-0.410 (0.430)	-0.150 (0.390)	0.580 (0.360)
Low Status * Group Importance	-0.310 (0.370)	0.270 (0.340)	-0.150 (0.310)
Constant	3.500* (1.900)	4.800*** (1.700)	1.300 (1.600)
Observations	104	104	104
R <sup>2</sup>	0.140	0.088	0.350
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.058	0.001	0.290
Residual Std. Error (df = 94)	1.200	1.100	1.000
F Statistic (df = 9; 94)	1.700*	1.000	5.700***

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

## Discussion

While the experiment conducted failed to provide definitive support for any of the hypotheses set forth, there is still much to learn from it and further research steps to take.

With respect to Hypothesis One, we can state with confidence that support for the Punitive Policy aimed at African Americans is greater than that aimed at students violating the Honor Code. We can also see that the vast majority of simulations involved support for the African American Punitive Policy being greater than the Alcohol Policy. The supposition in designing the policies was that a student could be affected by the Alcohol policy by bad luck while the Honor Code would require a deliberate moral transgression and therefore there would be a greater cognitive distance between the perceiver and the target of the policy. This may not have been the case. What is definite, however, is that nobody in the sample could ever be African American, creating a greater cognitive distance between the target group and any of the perceivers, resulting in greater support for the policy punishing them. The idea of cognitive distance does show some support in the experiment and more time can be spent developing this theory.

The other unfortunate conclusion to draw is that the result seen captures nothing more than racial resentment and without that factor, status may have no effect on approval of the Punitive Policies introduced in this experiment.

Hypothesis Two, while showing no significant results, was also hamstrung by a great lack of variance in the independent variable. Subjects were students at The University of North Carolina, mostly in their first or second year, and were asked if they would maintain relationships with UNC past graduation. Almost every student responded in the highest two categories. Without variance in Group Importance it is difficult to get meaningful results. Scholarship has been consistent in showing that the importance an individual places in their group membership has real effects on behavior (Branscombe and Wann 1994; Noel, Wann and Branscombe 1995), so if future work supports Hypotheses Three and Four, we can still expect Group Importance to exacerbate these effects.

The main purpose of this experiment was to show that when an individual's status was

salient, either high or low, that they would engage in cognitive processes which would cause them to be more in favor of the adoption of punitive policies. The experiment failed to show any significant results in this regard.

The first and most obvious reason for this is the number of participants. With 104 participants, no treatment group received more than 40 observations. The second reason, and one that requires some further thought, is determining whether the status manipulation worked at all. In the real world, individuals belong to many groups and some of those groups certainly mean a lot to them. If the individual feels like they are far different from the prototype in either direction, we can expect that will also have real meaning to them. Telling students that a test is an accurate indicator of success when the student is taking the test on a computer at their own home, where the student might have heard from some other students about the experiment and where the student might be hurrying through the test as quickly as possible without concern for the results - these are all possible and likely shortcomings of the convenience sample survey experiment.

Another factor to consider is that group membership has been shown to induce changes in behavior in multiple experimental settings. We favor our in-group even when the in-group does not mean anything outside of experimental settings (Tajfel et al. 1971). High status has effects on individuals (Crocker and McGraw 1984; Crocker et al. 1987; Austin and Worchel 1986) as does low-status (Branscombe and Wann 1994; Noel, Wann and Branscombe 1995). Group membership for University students, in a setting where practically all of the students' social interactions involve the group in some form, is meaningful to the students. I believe that when presented with a situation where group membership and status concerns are real, and the policies presented to the students are seen as having a real effect on the students' futures, that students in different positions of status will respond differently.

The beginning of the fall semester will provide a new opportunity to conduct an experiment on students, many of whom will be first year students unfamiliar with research requirements and for whom status will be a concern. Being new to the college environment will have them looking for information about whether they are prototypical or whether

they are of low or high status in the new group that they have entered. An experiment in which they are brought into a laboratory environment, given information that will help them determine their status and then asked to judge policies affecting groups that they will be competing against for four years will be more likely to produce real results because the feelings of status will be more real to individuals actively seeking that information. Having students come in and complete "aptitude" tests or tests which measure the ability to socially integrate at the University will also give an air of legitimacy to the process, one which was missing in this first experiment. Students can also be asked to complete personality inventories prior to the experiment to separate those questions and statements from the subject matter of the experiment itself.

Theoretically, I still believe there is justification for the assertion that status influences policy evaluation. The results of this experiment neither refute nor support this conclusion. There is much promise in a more carefully crafted experiment with subjects seeking information regarding status and which more carefully identifies the dimensions upon which individuals place cognitive distance between their in-groups and out-groups.

# APPENDIX A

Fig. 9: Sample High Status Condition

Thank you for completing the N.C.C.A.S. You scored 56 out of a possible 60 points.  
Your results from the N.C.C.A.S. place you in the following percentiles:

All students at the University of North Carolina: **89th percentile**  
This means that you scored **higher than 88 percent** of all UNC students to have taken this test.

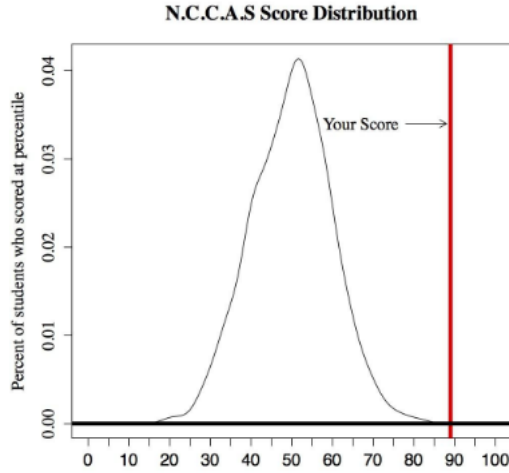
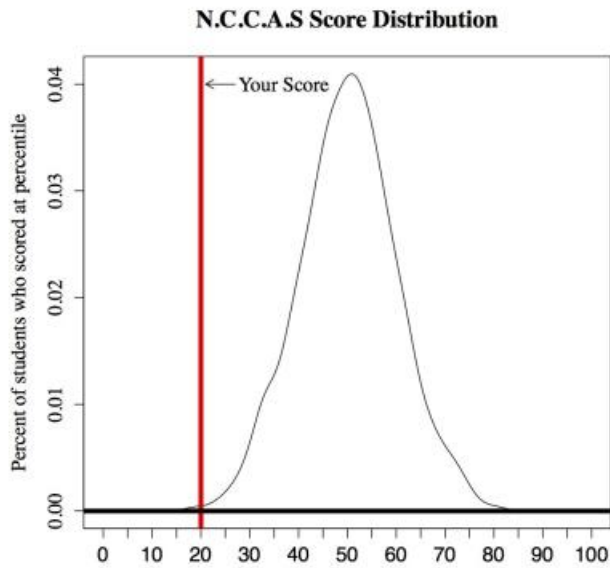


Fig. 10: Sample Low Status Condition

Thank you for completing the N.C.C.A.S. You scored 16 out of a possible 60 points.  
Your results from the N.C.C.A.S. place you in the following percentiles:

All students at the University of North Carolina: **20th percentile**  
This means that you have scored **higher than 19%** and **lower than 80%** of all students at the University of North Carolina who have taken this test.



## APPENDIX B

### SDO:

1. Winning is more important than how the game is played
2. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups of people to do so
3. If we treated people more equally we would have fewer problems in this country (reverse coded)
4. There should be social equality between groups (reverse coded)
5. Sometimes violence is necessary to put other groups of people in their place
6. This country would be better off if inferior groups stayed in their place
7. We should strive for increased social equality between groups (reverse coded)

### Trait Empathy:

1. I feel sad when I see a lonely stranger in a group
2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me
3. When someone gets hurt in my presence, I feel sad and want to help them
4. Occasionally I am not very sympathetic to my friends when they are depressed (reverse coded)
5. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me

### Trait Contempt:

1. I consider myself to be a very cold person
2. Expressing dislike to other people makes me uncomfortable (reverse coded)
3. Anyone who knows me well would say that I'm a pretty cold person



## APPENDIX C

### *Non-Punitive*

1. Currently there are two sites on the University of North Carolina's Campus where the sale of alcoholic beverages is allowed: The Carolina Inn and the George Watts Hill Alumni Center. The task force recommends that the University apply for alcohol permits at the University of North Carolina Law School and the Kenan-Flagler Business School, in order to allow alcohol sales at various alumni events.

2. The University of North Carolina's Honor Code currently states that five students must be present to hear challenges to an alleged honor code violation. The task force recommends that students be given the option to have either three or seven students at said hearings.

3. The University of North Carolina currently employs six individuals whose job descriptions are related to ensuring that African American students' transition to life on campus is seamless and that serve as a first resource for any concerns. These employees are currently under the supervision of the Office of the Dean. The task force recommends that these employees be transitioned to the Office of Residential Life.

### *Punitive*

1. North Carolina General Statute 18B-302 makes it a crime to aid or abet any individual under 21 in the procurement or possession of alcohol. Current university policy dictates that an individual found in violation of this statute, at minimum, attend alcohol counseling. Any further punishment will be based on additional considerations such as past history with alcohol. The task force recommends that any student of any age found aiding or abetting any individual under 21 in the procurement or possession of alcohol be automatically placed on probation for one year and be suspended for no less than one semester if caught violating the statute again during the probationary period. Individuals under 21 will be considered to have violated their probation if they are also caught possessing or being under the influence of alcohol.

2. Current University Policy allows for an Honor Court to hear cases of academic dishonesty to determine whether a violation has occurred. After this determination, the Honor Court has the ability to recommend probation, a suspension, a suspension from UNC-Chapel Hill (but not all UNC campuses, meaning that the student may apply for admission to UNC-Asheville, UNC-Wilmington, etc.), expulsion or a written warning. The task force recommends that upon a finding of a violation, all students must be suspended for at least one year.

3. The University of North Carolina grants 200 full-tuition scholarships to African American residents of North Carolina who can demonstrate significant financial need. These students are currently required to maintain a 3.0 G.P.A. The task force recommends that in order to provide these scholarships to the most academically deserving students, this requirement should be raised to at 3.5 G.P.A.

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