

Toward a Social Representations Theory of Attitude Change: The Effect of Message Framing on General and Specific Attitudes toward Equality and Entitlement

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A representational theory of attitude change integrating research on social representations and media framing effects is proposed. The theory seeks to explain why some aspects of attitude and opinion are more malleable than others. It is posited that the framing of a given social issue may influence isolated attitudes and cognitions related to specific aspects of that issue (peripheral elements); however, framing should be less likely to influence relevant attitudes to the extent that they are anchored in societally elaborated representations, and hence form strong and coherent evaluative associations with more general concepts and values (central or core elements). As an initial test of the theory, proposed changes to a university affirmative action policy were framed using either a traditional remedial action or newly developed New Zealand-specific bicultural partnership frame. Qualitative analyses indicated that irrespective of condition, New Zealand European/Pakeha students endorsed societally elaborated "standard" discourses that positioned equality as being based solely on individual merit (i.e., grades) and opposed policies that also included ethnic group membership as a criteria used to govern resource allocations (i.e., targeted scholarships for ethnic minorities). However, participants who read the bicultural partnership frame tended to hedge such discourses by expressing limited support for the isolated and less heavily anchored issues specific to that frame. Quantitative analyses further demonstrated that although participants expressed increased support for a specific affirmative action program framed in terms of biculturalism, more generalized attitudes toward resource allocations favoring minority groups remained unchanged across conditions.

emphasizes the durability of attitudes, while the latter draws upon the same cognitive architecture at the individual level to argue for malleability.

The purpose of this paper is to offer a theoretical perspective integrating social representations theory (Moscovici, 1984; 1988) and framing effects theory (see Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Entman, 1993; Gamson, 1992; Hertog & McLeod, 2001) in order to explain why some forms of attitude toward social issues are so much harder to change than others. Toward this goal we seek to (a) develop and contrast a *bicultural partnership frame* for affirmative action based on representations appropriate to New Zealand (NZ) with a version of the well documented *remedial action frame* identified in North American media and political discourse (e.g., Gamson & Modigliani, 1987), and (b) present quantitative and qualitative analyses of both participants' generalized attitudes toward equality and entitlement, and their more specific attitudes toward an affirmative action policy for ethnic minorities evoked by these contrasting frames.

Social representations theory

Social representations are widely communicated bodies of knowledge that are shared to a greater or lesser extent among various subgroups in society (Farr & Moscovici, 1984). They include (but are not limited to) publicly elaborated arguments concerning issues of central importance to society (Billig, 1998; De Rosa, 2003). Social representations thus reflect socially

The past three decades have witnessed the emergence of new public discourses regarding affirmative action for minority groups (Van Dijk, 1993). Such discourses are often framed in terms of *reverse discrimination* or *preferential treatment*, which draw upon egalitarian values and implicit rather than explicit discourses involving race in order to deny minority groups better access to resources while defending the speaker against charges of racism (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Reeves, 1983; Van Dijk, 1993; Wetherell

& Potter, 1992). As a consequence, the civil rights movement of the 1960's has struggled to sustain support for affirmative action policies that go beyond legislating against overt discrimination (i.e., old fashioned racism, McConahay, 1986; Sears, 1988). In other contexts, a robust literature has demonstrated that the way that information is presented, or the perspective taken in a message, will influence the responses of the individual to the issue at hand (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; see also Iyengar, 1991). The former literature

elaborated ways of thinking about and discussing an issue. Moscovici (1984, 1988) refers to the way a society builds linguistic repertoires, customs, and thinking around issues (like affirmative action) as "objectification." Objectified social representations provide society with culturally sanctioned repertoires for managing debate and building consensus. They are used to anchor new information so that most unfamiliar developments are absorbed (anchored) within familiar frameworks provided by existing social representations (Wagner et al., 1999). Social representations are similar to schemas (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) in their effects at the individual level, but the theory emphasizes the societal origins and effects of shared bodies of organized knowledge (see Wagner, 1994; Liu & Hilton, in press).

The civil rights movement drew its arguments for legitimacy from egalitarianism, a core social representation for modern democracy (e.g., Rokeach, 1973). Not coincidentally, the new right drew its arguments against affirmative action from the same source. We argue that *both* the civil rights movement of the 1960's and the new right of the 1980's developed arguments that were anchored to the social representation of egalitarianism as a core value of democracy (see Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Kinder & Sanders, 1990). In the United States, for example, there is a powerful historical precedent for disenfranchised groups (e.g., non-land owning men, immigrant Europeans, women, Blacks, Asians, etc) successively calling society to account for its failure to maintain promises of freedom and equality (Huntington, 1996).

One key to mobilizing public opinion is to anchor specific social issues or policy aims within the framework of a widely accepted social representation (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Liu et al., 2005). The representation must already have societal currency, but the argument may formulate links from a social representation to a specific issue in a novel way (e.g., the suffragette movement argued that equality should be applied to women as well as men in the domain of voting; the new right argued that race-based quotas were reverse discrimination against the majority). Over time, the use of such

arguments comes to change the social representation itself, so that the social representation of egalitarianism as a core value in democracy evolves slowly through a process of argumentation (Billig, 1988; see for example Huguet, Latané, & Bourgeois, 1998). The key, however, is that change occurs through societally elaborated repertoires that individuals cannot generate and maintain on their own. Hence, an attitude or opinion anchored to a social representation will be much harder to change than a new or peripheral issue unattached to social representations (Liu et al., 2005). Sibley and Liu (2004, p. 97) alluded to this possibility when they argued that "by anchoring race-based issues that are initially resource-specific in social representations of symbolic threat at a global level, peoples' representations of a given issue may be transformed thus making it more difficult to target a given issue without also targeting the plethora of other more abstract, and thus less easily falsifiable, race-based social representations."

The present research elaborates upon these arguments and outlines two core premises underlying a social representations theory of attitude change. These two premises are tested using a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Premise 1: A definition of anchoring. Perceptions of a given social issue will be more heavily anchored (i.e., have undergone objectification incorporating them into a social representation), according to the extent that they are discussed and reproduced in politics, media, and everyday life, and related to the global repertoires surrounding that issue in society (e.g., issues of egalitarianism and entitlement in the case of affirmative action). The degree to which attitudes toward a given social issue form strong and coherent evaluative associations with more general concepts and values related to that issue should therefore be indicative of the degree to which anchoring of that issue has taken place. Such attitudes are derived from what Abric (1993) and Wagner, Valencia, and Elajabbarieta (1996) have referred to as the central or core elements of a social representation. This premise is examined using qualitative analyses of participant's open-ended discourse.

Premise 2: A social representations hypothesis of attitude change. The way that information promoting a social issue is framed may influence isolated attitudes and cognitions relating to specific aspects of that issue (peripheral elements of a social representation; see Abric, 1993; Wagner et al., 1996); however, the framing of any given social issue will be less likely to influence attitudes that are more heavily anchored in societally elaborated representations of the general principles underlying that issue (central or core elements). This hypothesis is tested using quantitative analyses of participant's responses to Likert item attitude measures.

Framing effects

The application of social representations theory may help explain some of the mixed effects reported in previous research that has used framing manipulations in the attempt to change attitudes and cognitions regarding various social issues (e.g., Domke, 2001; Domke, McCoy, & Torres, 1999; Fine, 1992; Liu & Sibley, 2004; McCleod, 1995; McCleod & Detenber, 1999; Valkenburg, Semetko, & de Vreese, 1999). McCleod and Detenber (1999), for example, presented participants with one of three television news stories that covered the same social protest but framed support for the status quo at different levels. These frames significantly affected participants' attitudes toward specific aspects of the protest, such as identification with and criticism of the protesters. However, differences in participants' generalized attitudes regarding the expressive rights of protesters and perceptions of the utility of protesting displayed notably weaker effects, which we argue may have been more resistant to change because they were more heavily anchored in social representations of free speech.

Similarly, McCleod (1995) reported that media frames influenced participants' perceptions of the protesters in a social movement, but failed to influence more general perceptions regarding the right to protest. When explaining these results, McCleod (1995, p. 18) commented that "ties to political predispositions insulate subjects' perceptions of protest utility from being influenced by an exposure to a single protest message. But this does not mean that consistent

patterns in news coverage do not have a long-term, cumulative reduction of public perceptions of protest utility." Elaborating upon such comments, we argue that McLeod's (1995) and others' results are consistent with a social representations hypothesis of attitude change, and suggest that the way in which an issue is framed may influence specific and isolated attitudes to a greater degree than it does more generalized attitudes anchored to social representations underlying the issue.

Consistent with this perspective, Arriola and Cole (2001) also reported that participants drew upon frames such as *no preferential treatment* or *reverse discrimination* identified by Gamson and Modigliani (1987) when expressing attitudes and opinions toward affirmative action in natural discourse – a process that we argue indicates that these frames may form culturally sanctioned repertoires for managing debate and building consensus when discussing social issues around resource allocations favouring minority groups.

Overview and guiding hypotheses

Although frames that successfully increase support for affirmative action have been identified, research in this area has tended to focus on frames used in American media by American political elites (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). We argue that further research is needed in order to develop frames that (a) maximally increase support for affirmative action policy tailored to the specific socio-political context, and (b) distinguish between isolated attitudes toward specific aspects of a given issue/policy, and more generalized attitudes anchored in social representations underlying the issue.

In NZ, unlike most other Western democracies, egalitarianism may be only one of two social representations providing legitimacy for arguments regarding affirmative action. The most important event in NZ history is considered to be the Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840 between the British Crown (representing NZers of European ancestry, or "Pakeha¹") and Maori (indigenous people; see Liu, Wilson, McClure, & Higgins, 1999, for a brief history). NZ is a formally bicultural

nation, with the civil rights movement of the 1960's and 1970's culminating in the principles of the Treaty becoming enshrined as governing principles for NZ as a nation. Hence, arguments for affirmative action can be based upon the principles of the Treaty (i.e., bicultural race relations), as the symbol of a partnership between Pakeha and Maori, rather than on egalitarianism at the individual level.

Drawing upon previous research examining the trends in everyday Maori – Pakeha (or bicultural) discourse and attitudes (e.g., McCreanor, 1997; Nairn and McCreanor, 1990, 1991; Sibley & Liu, 2004; Sibley, Robertson, & Kirkwood, 2005; Singer, 1996; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), and depictions of issues related to Treaty settlements in the NZ media (e.g., Barclay & Liu, 2003), we developed messages promoting this proposed affirmative action policy that used either (a) a variant of the traditional remedial action frame identified by Gamson and Modigliani (1987), which apportioned blame based on historical grievances and inequality; or (b) a newly developed bicultural partnership frame tailored to affirmative action policies for Maori in NZ's unique cultural context. Consistent with previous discourse analyses of similar issues (e.g., Tuffin, Praat, & Frewin, 2004), the bicultural partnership frame emphasized the reciprocal relationship between Maori and Pakeha, and focused on the longer-term increases in opportunities for all NZers provided by affirmative action policies (e.g., capacity building). This latter frame should be less familiar and hence harder for individuals to refute compared to the remedial action frame which draws on representations that are widely available in all liberal democracies (Liu, in press).

The anchoring of qualitative responses. Drawing upon the social representations theory of attitude change outlined above, and consistent with previous research (i.e., Nairn & McCreanor, 1990, 1991, 1997; Arriola & Cole, 2001), we argue that although discourse opposing affirmative action may vary in its formulation, it should nevertheless boil down to the same fundamental values in contemporary liberal discourse – that is, arguments defining equality as being based solely

on individual merit rather than, for instance, arguments defining equality as a process whereby it may sometimes be necessary to allocate resources on the basis of ethnic group membership rather than individual merit in order to redress categorical disadvantages currently experienced by a given ethnic minority. Qualitative analysis of the open-ended justifications provided by participants regarding their stance on targeted scholarships for ethnic minorities examined this issue. We expected participants to draw upon the same underlying core representations of preferential versus equal treatment when arguing for or against affirmative action across conditions (i.e., regardless of the way that affirmative action is framed).

The social representations hypothesis of attitude change. Consistent with Sibley and Liu (2004), we then assess specific attitudes toward affirmative action using a measure of support for targeted scholarships for ethnic minorities, whereas we assess generalized attitudes anchored to social representations underlying this issue using a series of items drawn from McConahay's (1986) modern racism scale. These items reflect attitudes toward the allocation of resources to minority groups that draw on discourses of equality and entitlement (e.g., 'Too much money is being spent on Treaty settlements'). Measures of identification as NZ European/Pakeha (ethnic identification), identification as a New Zealander (national identification), nationalism, and patriotism were also included as covariates in all quantitative analyses in order to control for the potential effects of social-identity related processes and therefore improve the internal validity of our design (this issue is discussed in greater detail below).

Based upon the social representations theory of attitude change, it is predicted that: (*H1a*) Pakeha who read a message promoting targeted scholarships for ethnic minorities framed in terms of the bicultural partnership between Maori and Pakeha will express greater support for targeted scholarships *specifically* than those who read a message framed in terms of the necessity of remedial action due to historical injustices. However, we do

not expect this effect to generalize to more general attitudes toward equality and entitlement. Instead we predict that: (*H1b*) generalized attitudes (anchored in and reflecting core elements of social representations underlying the issue) will remain unchanged regardless of how the message promoting targeted scholarships is framed.

Method

Participants

Ninety-two undergraduate students studying psychology at Victoria University of Wellington participated for partial course credit (31 males, 61 females). All participants were born in NZ and self-identified as solely NZ European/Pakeha in ethnic group membership. Participants ranged from 17 to 46 years of age ($M = 19.57$ $SD = 4.22$).

Procedure and materials

Research was conducted in sessions containing between 1-8 participants. Each session was randomly allocated to one of two conditions in which participants read an argument outlining why the School of Psychology at Victoria University of Wellington wished to increase targeted scholarships (refer to Appendix A). This outline was presented using either a traditional remedial action frame ($n = 46$) or a bicultural partnership frame emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between Maori and Pakeha ($n = 46$).

Both versions first outlined current School of Psychology policy in which one of three masters and one of four PhD scholarships for postgraduate study in psychology were reserved in the first case for an appropriately qualified Maori or Pacific Nations student. The document outlined a proposed change to this policy that was currently being considered, where targeted scholarships for Maori and Pacific Nations students would be expanded to include the honours year. This proposal stated that scholarship funds, at both honours and further postgraduate levels, were a limited resource and that increasing the number of targeted scholarships for ethnic minorities would decrease the number of general (non-targeted) scholarships available to other students studying

at these levels. These statements were factual in nature and accurately reflected current university policy and intentions in this area (see Sibley & Liu, 2004, for further details).

The astute reader will have noted that although actual affirmative action policies in the Faculty of Science (where Psychology is located) at Victoria University are targeted for both Pacific and Maori students, Pacific Nations' peoples are generally not included within the purview of the Treaty of Waitangi. Furthermore, a faculty-wide mentoring programme for Maori and Pacific Nations students is in place at Victoria University that is highly salient and yields excellent results; this is framed within the university's Treaty obligations. Given that realism and lack of deception were ethically central to this research, we opted to describe the situation accurately and accept a certain degree of slippage in the argument.

The second half of the document then presented a rationale for this proposed change using either a remedial action or bicultural partnership frame. Following Gamson and Modigliani (1987), the remedial action frame emphasized the importance of targeted scholarships for Maori students in order to meet current Treaty obligations and assuage grievances about past historical injustices. The frame also mentioned Pacific Nations students, as university policy included Pacific Nations students in its targeted scholarships policy. The bicultural partnership frame, in contrast, emphasized the importance of targeted scholarships for Maori students in order to promote a long-term partnership between Maori and Pakeha. Pilot testing using an independent group of university students indicated that the two frames were discernibly different and were each interpreted as emphasizing their intended aspects. The two arguments were of a similar length (721 versus 693 words) and were written by the authors. Participants were allowed ten minutes to silently read this document.

Participants were then invited to write an open-ended response to the targeted scholarships proposal, expressing their opinions toward affirmative action policies in NZ in

general, and with regards to targeted scholarships for Maori and Pacific Nations students studying psychology specifically. Participants were informed that grouped anonymous comments from their written responses would be used in a report that would be considered by School of Psychology when determining policy on future scholarship allocations. Participants were given 15 minutes to complete this task.

We used a discursive approach to analyse participants' qualitative responses (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Potter & Wetherell 1987). This involves approaching language as a form of action (Edwards & Potter, 1993) with which participants put forth competing versions of social reality in an attempt to manage and warrant their own positions with regard to the frames justifying targeted scholarships. Farr (1993) acknowledged that the methods of discursive psychology are congruent with social representation theory, and following the example of Augoustinos and Penny (2001), we see this as a valid approach for analyzing the ways in which 'common sense' and socially sanctioned representations are used to justify different positions on a contentious issue. In particular, we were interested in the ways participants managed ideological dilemmas (Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton, & Radley, 1988), such as the tension between biculturalism and egalitarianism. Extracts were therefore chosen for analysis on this basis. Our qualitative analysis is thus intended to illustrate the ways in which social representations of equality are involved in forming stances on the specific issue of targeted scholarships in NZ, whereas the quantitative analysis examines the effects of message framing on attitude change.

Attitudes toward the proposed affirmative action program providing targeted scholarships for Maori and Pacific Nations students studying psychology were then assessed using two items: 'How fair would you consider targeted scholarships for Maori and Pacific Nations students in psychology?', which was rated on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all fair) to 7 (very fair), and 'How strongly would you support targeted scholarships Maori and Pacific Nations students in psychology?', which was rated on a

scale ranging from 1 (totally against) to 7 (totally in favor). These two items were averaged to give a mean score assessing levels of support for targeted scholarships for ethnic minorities ($\alpha = .83$).

General attitudes tapping into social representations of egalitarianism and resource redistribution in favour of minority groups were assessed using four items drawn from McConahay's (1986) modern racism scale ('The government has gone too far in giving preferential treatment for racial minorities', 'Maori are getting too demanding in their push for Treaty rights', 'Too much money is being spent on Treaty settlements', 'This country would be better off if we all thought of ourselves as just being New Zealanders'). These four items were rated on scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). These items were reverse scored and then averaged to provide an index of support for resource allocations in favour of minorities ($\alpha = .79$). Higher scores indicated increased support. Items were chosen for their correspondence to open-ended statements reported during similar qualitative research (Sibley & Liu, 2004).

As a covariate check, participants lastly completed two versions of Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) 12-item collective self-esteem scale, which were worded to assess ethnic ($\alpha = .81$), and national identification ($\alpha = .70$), respectively. The scale included items such as 'In general, being a [NZ European/Pakeha, New Zealander] is an important part of my self-image' (protrait), and 'Overall being a [NZ European/Pakeha, New Zealander] has very little to do with how I feel about myself' (contrait). As a further check, participants also completed six-item measures of patriotism ($\alpha = .78$), and nationalism ($\alpha = .80$) (Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989). Items assessing patriotism included 'I am proud to be a New Zealander' (protrait), and 'It is not that constructive to develop an emotional attachment to one's country' (contrait). Items assessing nationalism included 'In view of New Zealand's track record for success, we should have a bigger voice in the United Nations' (protrait), and 'It is really not that important that New Zealand be number one in anything it does'

(contrait). These four measures were entered as covariates in all analyses in order to rule out alternative social identity-related explanations of the findings (see below for details). These items were rated on scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicated increased levels of ethnic identity, national identity, nationalism, and patriotism, respectively. Descriptive statistics for all scales used in this research are presented in Table 1.

Upon completion, participants placed their completed surveys and stimulus materials in a locked cabinet, ensuring their anonymity. A male Pakeha research assistant who was blind to the experimental conditions and theoretical rationale of the study conducted all sessions. Participants were fully debriefed and consented to their data being used in additional research. The university's human ethics committee approved all procedures.

Results

The anchoring of qualitative responses

Part of the remedial action frame suggested that European colonisers took advantage of Maori and implied that this had relevance for present-day Pakeha, specifically because of the generally disadvantaged status of Maori in contemporary NZ society. Some of the responses illustrated the ways in which this dilemma can be dealt with, such as:

Example 1 (Remedial action frame):

I feel that by offering Maori and Pacific Nations students a scholarship even if their grades are lower than others, would defeat the purpose of having people from those ethnic groups as academics, etc. By allowing students with lower grades, the standards of honours and PhD's are lowered. Also it creates an unfair bias, not to sound racist, but the NZ European people studying psychology did not take away the Maori land, so why personally should they/we be punished if we have better grades. It would be unfair to not award a scholarship to a New Zealand European if they have higher grades than a New Zealand Maori.

This extract shows how past discrimination may be acknowledged

and yet remedial action discredited. This is done in part by differentiating those who will not receive scholarships – "the NZ European people studying psychology" – from those who enacted the past discrimination of "tak[ing] away Maori land". Targeted scholarships are thereby construed as unfair punishment upon Pakeha who attained higher grades than scholarship recipients. This is consistent with the findings of previous discursive studies, whereby majority ethnic group members argue that it is unfair and unrealistic to blame present generations for the mistakes of their ancestors (see LeCouteur & Augoustinos, 2001, for a review). The concluding point, and underlying value, is that people must be rewarded on their individual merits, rather than ethnic identity, even if their ethnic group has been discriminated against in the past. Similar arguments are put forward in the following extract:

Example 2 (Remedial action frame):

I don't agree with targeted scholarships. It is my belief that everyone should be on a level playing field and that acceptance is decided by overall achievement rather than race. Yes there have been injustices in the past but in today's society everyone has equal opportunities for education. It comes down to how much you want to take those opportunities. Many Pakeha/others have to pay their way through university by way of student loan and rejecting them for scholarships over another person, who may not have done as well as them, because of their background is unfair and racist.

This extract similarly acknowledges the wrongs of the past, but denies their relevance with regard to allocating money, specifically because "in today's society everyone has equal opportunities for education." Again, the policies are constructed as illegitimate because they are not considering each person on his or her abilities. Riley (2002) identified similar discursive constructions that were used to discredit policies aimed at improving women's opportunities in the work place, whereby an emphasis on people's individual merits was used to undermine claims of group inequality. With this argument, a policy that rewards people based on their race is racist rather than corrective; in a society where everyone has the

same opportunities, everyone should be treated the same.

In contrast to the remedial action frame, the bicultural partnership frame suggested that the scholarships were needed to increase the participation of Maori academics and the inclusion of Maori cultural perspectives in psychology for the improvement of NZ society. Some of the extracts illustrated the negotiation between this need and the fairness of allocating scholarships based on ethnic identity. For example:

Example 3 (Bicultural partnership frame): Indeed I believe a more Maori perspective in psychology at [Victoria University] could be beneficial for the school as a whole and provide different viewpoints on traditional western psychology. It will be good to 'semi-separate' our views from the west due to the Maori influence. However, it is unfair to reward a certain amount of Maori (+Pacific Nations) scholarships for masters and PhDs. People should not be treated differently because of their ethnic background, but all people treated due to their mental ability in grades.

Just as extracts from the remedial action frame recognised the significance of historical disadvantage, this extract acknowledges the importance of cultural diversity in an academic setting. However, it maintains that scholarship allocations based on ethnicity (or "race") are an unfair way of addressing this issue. Here the fundamental concern is that people must be treated on their individual merits in the relevant field, which is "grades". This illustrates the ideological tension between encouraging participation by various cultural groups in society, and actually allocating resources based on these cultural memberships (Billig et al., 1988). Despite the difference between this argument and the previous two, the central point remains: people must be treated the same regardless of ethnicity.

Similarly, the following extract discredits the proposal and highlights the dangers of the suggested approach:

Example 4 (Bicultural partnership frame): I believe it should stay the same, as it is unfair for other races who work harder with an A- whereas Maori for some unknown reason can get in with lower marks. This only encourages them to not work as hard. Maori may be

a smaller percentage of the population but nothing is stopping them from trying to get an A- like everyone else. It would be good to have more Maori working in this field but they have to want to do it themselves, not be forced. We are degrading Maori by making them outcasts by letting them in with targeted scholarships.

Again, this extract argues that it is racist to allocate resources based on race rather than personal achievement. The injustice of the targeted scholarships proposal is emphasised by arguing that it is not only unfair for those who will not be eligible for the scholarships, it also unfairly degrades potential recipients.

Lastly, the following extract illustrates how the notions of equality and fairness are similarly used when justifying targeted scholarships:

Example 5 (Remedial action frame): This seems fair to me. If the playing field were truly level, I think eligible students would be getting an unfair advantage, but as it is not (due to socio-economic backgrounds, etc) I think it is probably the best way (that I've heard) to obtain a fairer representation of Maori + Pacific Island students among academics. – more Maori and Pacific Island students in respected (by Pakeha standards) positions gives others inspiration to succeed in both Pakeha terms (academically + economically) + Pacific Island – changing systems with knowledge, sharing ancestral systems with others.

In arguing in favour for the proposals, this extract is drawing on the same fundamental values as the previous extracts: fair treatment. In contrast to previous extracts that argued that everyone has equal opportunities, here it is argued that the "playing field" is not "truly level", as Maori and Pacific Nations students are socially and economically disadvantaged. This extract does not differ in the fundamental values that are drawn upon to justify this stance; rather it is with regard to *the specific issue at hand* that the proposed form of affirmative action would be a reasonable way of attempting fair and equal treatment.

In sum, these extracts illustrate the importance of ensuring equality and fairness in the distribution of resources regardless of support or opposition to targeted scholarships.

With regard to the remedial action frame, the extracts suggest historical wrongs should be acknowledged, but that targeted scholarships unfairly punish ineligible students, who are represented as not responsible for discriminations of the past. In reference to the bicultural partnership frame, the extracts suggest that it is important to recognise and support cultural diversity and participation, but that resource allocations based on ethnic identity are an unfair way of achieving this goal.

Finally, support was given for targeted scholarships when they were seen as an appropriate way to achieve fair treatment by addressing social and economic barriers, and thus the value of equal treatment was maintained, but the specific course of action varied with the specific construction of the issue. Specific arguments may vary in accordance to the way in which an affirmative action policy is presented, yet people will still draw on the fundamental representation of egalitarianism to justify opposition to such policies. For instance, of the 46 responses in each condition, only three in the biculturalism frame and five in the remedial action frame did not explicitly refer to notions of fairness or equality (interobserver reliability for this estimate was 100%). The fact that support for the policy was also framed in terms of fair treatment suggests that those who support affirmative action may not differ in their endorsement of fundamental societal values; rather, they construe the issue in a way that makes affirmative action a legitimate method for attempting equality, as opposed to creating new inequalities.

The social representations hypothesis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the factorial independence of our measures of isolated attitudes toward targeted scholarships specifically, and generalized attitudes derived from social representations underlying this issue. Hu and Bentler (1999) argued that it is important to consider both the standardized Root Mean Square Residual (sRMR; a residual-based fit index) and one or more index of comparative fit, such as the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) or Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), when considering the overall adequacy

of a model. sRMR values below .08 and GFI, CFI and NNFI indices above .95 are indicative of good-fitting models (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

According to these criteria a two-factor solution differentiating specific attitudes toward targeted scholarships and generalized attitudes regarding equality and entitlement provided an acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(8, n=92) = 15.08$; GFI = .95; NNFI = .96; CFI = .98; sRMR = .05. This two-factor solution also described the data significantly better than an alternative solution in which items assessing isolated attitudes and social representations loaded on a single factor, $\chi^2_{diff} = 18.08, p < 0.01$. These results indicated that items assessing attitudes toward targeted scholarships specifically, and generalized attitudes drawing from social representations reflected psychometrically distinct constructs.

Overall, participant's mean levels of support for these two measures were not significantly different, $F(1,87) = 2.10, p = .15, \eta^2 = .02$. As can be seen in Table 1, general attitudes toward equality and entitlement were also highly positively correlated with more specific and isolated attitudes toward targeted scholarships, $r = .64$.

Consistent with our predictions, a 2 (remedial action or bicultural partnership frame) \times 2 (general versus specific and isolated attitudes) ANOVA with repeated measures on the second component revealed a significant interaction between the way in which the arguments promoting targeted scholarships for Maori studying psychology were framed and various aspects of support for affirmative action, $F(1,90) = 8.92, p = .004, \eta^2 = .09$.

As can be seen in Figure 1, consistent with Hypothesis 1a, Pakeha students who read a bicultural partnership framed argument promoting targeted scholarships expressed more support for the provision of targeted scholarships for Maori than those who read an argument framed in terms of remedial action, $F(1,90) = 7.55, p = .007, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .08$. However, consistent with Hypothesis 1b, the way in which the message was framed had no effect on more generalized attitudes anchored in social representations of equality and entitlement, $F(1,90) = .15, p = .70, \text{partial } \eta^2 < .01$.

Controlling for potential covariates

In cases where researchers wish to examine the effects of qualitatively different frames where experimental control of specific aspects of the independent variable is somewhat limited, we recommend that potential confounding variables be identified and included as covariates in order to remove their effects when assessing

changes in the dependent variable(s) of interest (see Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001, for discussion of this issue). By entering potentially confounding variables as covariates, and thus controlling for their effects, the validity of claims that the intended aspects of a given framing manipulation are indeed responsible for changes in the dependent variable of interest are increased.

In the present study, we considered identity related variables, namely levels of identification as NZ European/Pakeha (ethnic identification), levels of identification as a New Zealander (national identification), levels of patriotism and nationalism, and individual differences in the complexity of the written arguments generated by participants as the most likely confounds which may have also been systematically influenced by the framing manipulation and may therefore have been responsible for observed differences between global and specific attitudes toward affirmative action (see also Bizer & Petty, in press). Participants'

Figure 1: The effect of framed messages on general and specific attitudes

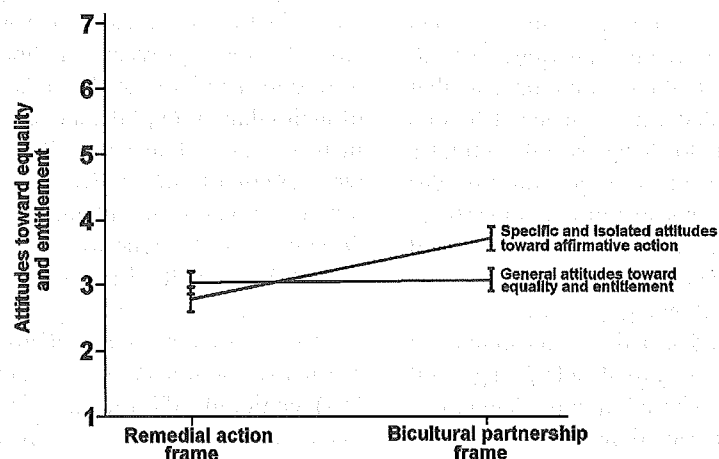


Table 1: Correlations among attitude and identity measures, patriotism and nationalism

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. General attitudes toward equality and entitlement	-	.64**	.01	-.01	-.15	.08

levels of ethnic identification, national identification, nationalism and patriotism were therefore entered as covariates in all analyses; however, they did not covary with any other effects, F 's < .40. Individual differences in the total number of words written when expressing personal views toward targeted scholarships ($M = 74.79$, $SD = 31.06$) and Flesch (1948) reading ease ($M = 43.86$, $SD = 15.20$), a measure of readability based on sentence and word length, also failed to covary with any other effects, F 's < .40. In sum, these results indicate that the differential effects of message framing on specific and general attitudes toward affirmative action were not explained by social identity related processes, or by differences in the sentence complexity of the written arguments generated by participants.

Discussion

Social representations are societally elaborated and socially shared bodies of knowledge. They are organized to maintain core knowledge systems while allowing changes to take place at the periphery (Abric, 1993; Wagner et al., 1996). The social representations theory of attitude change described here elaborates upon previous research suggesting that issue framing and other types of attitude salience manipulation are more likely to change specific attitudes as opposed to more general attitudes anchored in social representations (e.g., McLeod and Detenber, 1999; McCleod 1995). In this way societies may manage change by allowing specific and isolated attitudes and behaviors at the individual level to be more malleable than general attitudes anchored in core elements of social representations.

Consistent with this prediction, generalized attitudes toward resource allocations favouring minority groups remained unchanged regardless of whether targeted scholarships were promoted using a remedial action or bicultural partnership frame. Our qualitative data indicated that participants instead seemed to hedge their arguments and provide more detailed justifications for expressions of generalized opposition when faced with the bicultural partnership frame. Thus, although participants who read the bicultural partnership frame tended

to express increased support for the specific issue at hand (that of targeted scholarships for Maori and Pacific Nations students), they retained the right to object to the broader assertions of the frame in the context of larger societal issues. This failure to change students' attitudes may have occurred because our manipulation failed to affect the motivations and social representations underlying expressions of opposition to affirmative action (which we suspect are extremely resistant to change); instead, we simply caused participants to more explicitly justify expressions of opposition. This ability to manage ideological dilemmas at the rhetorical level has been documented most persuasively by discursive theorists (e.g., Billig et al., 1988), but is also part and parcel of social representations theory (De Rosa, 2003).

Discursively, Pakeha participants seemed to draw upon two different themes when expressing opposition toward targeted scholarships. The central theme apparent in Pakeha discourses opposing this affirmative action policy was the notion of equality as being based solely on individual merit. Such discourses tended to oppose any entitlement, provision or allocation of resources to individuals on the basis of their ethnic group membership, and instead argued that such allocations were unfair to other individuals who did not belong to that minority group. Discourses of this type were prevalent in both the bicultural partnership and remedial action conditions. Some Pakeha also expressed opposition to affirmative action favoring Maori by (re-)positioning the relevance of key historical events (e.g., The Treaty of Waitangi) in order to refute claims based on historical grievances. Such discourses tended to argue that Pakeha should not have to pay for the mistakes of their ancestors, and that we should let bygones be bygones. This second type of discourse appeared primarily in the remedial action condition. Together, these two themes appear to be central to the *standard story* of Maori-Pakeha relations (Nairn & McCreanor, 1990, 1991; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), and may function as socially elaborated legitimizing myths that justify expressions of opposition to social policy intended to benefit Maori

(see Sibley et al., 2005).

Our aim was to build a bridge between our qualitative results, showing such argumentation effects, and our quantitative results, showing persuasion effects for attitudes toward a specific affirmative action policy issue, but not more generalized attitudes toward equality and entitlement. These findings add a societal component to dual process models of persuasion (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Chen & Chaiken, 1999) that hold that there are central/peripheral or systematic/heuristic routes to attitude change driven by the *motivations* of the perceiver. Social representations theory suggests that the quality of information processing is not driven solely by individual differences, but also by resources provided by society in the form of shared representations derived from and located within that society and its culture. In other words, we predict content and domain specific effects in persuasion and attitude change. Given that representations of equality and entitlement are central to the functioning of democracy in Western societies, adults in these societies have sophisticated repertoires for managing argumentation and thinking about these issues. Variation in the amount of attention devoted to a message frame and the quality of the message are unlikely to change attitudes on such issues, and even if they do, we anticipate that they would return very quickly to status quo unless public opinion in the society as a whole changes in a way to maintain individual responses to a particular message (see Berkowitz & Rogers, 1986).

Caveat and conclusions

The experimental manipulation used in this research involved changes to substantial portions of the message frame. This methodology is common in research using frames identified in the media and in political discourse (e.g., Vaughan & Seifert, 1992; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Cowan, McClure & Wilson, 2002). Such an approach inevitably compromises some level of experimental control. Thus, one weakness of the present research is its limited experimental control due to qualitative differences in the way we framed affirmative action in the different conditions. At the same time, this type

of design allows meaningful insights on the holistic effects which different media frames have on shared representations of various social issues, which we believe may (a) help to bridge the gap between quantitative and qualitative approaches to persuasion and thus foster a more integrated theory of attitude change, and (b) provide further insight into both the processes underlying, and content of, social representations of biculturalism and Maori-Pakeha relations in the NZ context.

In order to conduct this research, we capitalized upon proposed changes to an actual affirmative action policy currently being considered by the School of Psychology at Victoria University. This policy involved offering targeted scholarships for appropriately qualified Maori and Pacific Nations students for honours level study in psychology. On the one hand, the description of genuine changes to affirmative action policy that could directly affect students studying psychology provided a high degree of ecological validity (as the proposal was *not* based on a hypothetical scenario). The use of descriptions based on actual policy also allowed us to conduct research that was relatively sensitive in nature that may not have been otherwise viable. On the other hand, the accurate description of the proposed policy change upon which our research capitalized meant that the policy details we presented necessarily included reference to Pacific Nations students (who are not explicitly identified in the Treaty of Waitangi and thus not formally part of NZ's legal bicultural system, but are often included in affirmative action). Thus, although the frames developed for use in this research drew upon discourses and representations surrounding biculturalism and obligations based on the Treaty of Waitangi, details of the proposed policy change also included reference to Pacific Nations students. This is an important caveat that future research should address.

Nevertheless, we consider the differential framing effects found here to be important in their own right. The high correlation between general and specific attitudes suggests that there may be an inductive pathway toward overall social change. To the extent that novel frames are able to change specific attitudes

across a variety of situations, they may cumulatively influence the overall social representation governing core systems of belief about society. Conversely, while a generalized attitude anchored in core elements of social representations may be extremely difficult to change, on the rare occasions when it does change, it should have dramatic effects as this new representation is applied to more specific attitudes.

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Note

¹ There is currently considerable debate in New Zealand regarding the most appropriate name for New Zealanders of European descent. Although New Zealand European is the most popular term (Liu, Wilson, McClure, & Higgins, 1999), Pakeha is the term that most strongly implies a relationship with Maori and hence seems most appropriate for this paper.

APPENDIX

General Overview of Proposed Affirmative Action Policy Change

Psychologists study an extremely wide range of topics. In fact, you have only to look through the chapters in the first year text book to appreciate just how broad an area psychology really is. One aim of the first year psychology courses Psyc 121 and 122 is to provide students with knowledge of the many different areas that psychologists study. However, the field of psychology is far less diverse than it could be. Most psychologists in the world today are trained in the United States, and among those trained in New Zealand, the vast majority are New Zealand Europeans. This research project is designed to assess student reactions to different policies that may be used to increase diversity in psychology, and to focus the resources of the university onto particular areas of importance.

VUW School of Psychology currently has a postgraduate awards policy that targets one of its four Masters scholarships and one of three PhD scholarships to students of Maori or Pacific Nations backgrounds. The first purpose of this research is to get student feedback on the policy, and to provide the School's Research and Student Affairs Committees with detailed information about how students feel about this policy. For instance, do you think it is fair to consider a person's ethnic background as one criterion for which to consider whether they might be eligible for a scholarship?

The second purpose of this research is to ask students how they might feel about a

change to current policy that allocates Honours year scholarships solely on the basis of grades. In 2001 students with an A- or higher average in the third year were offered tuition wavers to attend Honours in Psychology at VUW. How would you feel if the School were to target a fixed percentage of Honours year scholarships to Maori and Pacific Nations students (e.g., 10%), even if they had a lower grade point average? Please keep in mind that the total number of scholarships offered by the school would not change, but eligibility for the targeted scholarships would be limited to Maori and Pacific Nations students.

To gather a wide range of opinions from those who are affected by targeted scholarships policy, we are conducting research to assess student reactions to this policy. Before doing so, however, we would like you to consider the following:

Bicultural Partnership Frame

The spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi suggests that it is possible for two ethnic groups to be separate and distinct and yet abide in a relationship where each group honours and respects the other, and each part contributes to the betterment of the whole. The current lack of a Maori perspective in psychology prevents the full potential of partnership from being realized in areas such as mental health and the understanding of cultural differences. Maori concepts of spirituality, community, and connection to the land all offer unique possibilities to complement our existing notions of Western psychological theory in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

What use is it for New Zealand to be formally bicultural if one of the Treaty partners is unable to live up to its Treaty obligations because it is consistently in an under-privileged position? Maori notions of psychology and mental health are holistic. They imply that our mental well-being is connected to our relationships with community and family, with physical health, with spirituality. These ideas may well provide all New Zealanders with new perspectives on various aspects of psychology, not just Maori.

Learning to communicate with one another holistically and learning to evaluate psychological dysfunction in the context of a whole person within a community may in time provide insights that complement the causal model of psychology and mental health that Western science is working on. With a deeper understanding of an indigenous perspective, we may also be able to better understand what aspects of psychological theory and mental illness are culturally constructed. Maori and Pakeha may provide one another with different but useful perspectives on a variety of psychological theories, such as mental health.

Targeted scholarships are one way to develop more of a Maori perspective in

psychology. It would increase the number of Maori academics and practitioners in psychology. This would in turn help psychology to begin building a partnership between Maori and Pakeha that will enable each group to contribute to a bicultural nation as a whole.

Remedial Action Frame

Throughout the world indigenous peoples have suffered injustice from more recent colonists. This is especially true of Maori in New Zealand. Maori have had their land stolen and significant portions of their culture and learning damaged and destroyed by European settlers. In this sense one aspect of New Zealand's history from a Maori perspective is a story of disease, warfare and land alienation caused by early European settlers.

The Treaty of Waitangi, signed in 1840 and written into law in 1975 should be considered the legal foundation of New Zealand. Although the Treaty guarantees a partnership between Maori and Pakeha, in the past this has not always been honoured. One has only to consider the lands that have been taken from Maori in order to understand the legitimacy of Maori grievances.

The spirit of the Treaty states that Maori and Pakeha should be equal partners as far as possible. By providing targeted scholarships for Maori and Pacific Nations students, the School of Psychology can help to honour its obligations under the Treaty and ensure that Maori and Pacific Nations students are provided with an equal opportunity to study psychology. Indeed, it has been argued that the power to determine the curriculum for psychology is in itself a gate keeping mechanism that effectively keeps Maori out, or at least dissuades Maori students after a short stint. By honouring the Treaty and having a fixed percentage of scholarships for Maori and Pacific Nations students we will help to ensure that these students are not excluded from the predominantly Western psychological framework.

Targeted scholarships are one way to develop more of a Maori perspective in psychology. It would increase the number of Maori academics and practitioners in psychology. It will honour Treaty obligations and ensure that both Maori and Pakeha perspectives in psychology are taken seriously.

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