
David Simson
HOPE DIES LAST: THE PROGRESSIVE POTENTIAL AND REGRESSIVE REALITY OF THE ANTIBALKANIZATION APPROACH TO RACIAL EQUALITY

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This Article relies on Critical Race Theory concepts and social science research to make an important and timely contribution to a debate in law and public policy that is both long-standing and of immense current importance: What is the relationship between social cohesion on the one hand, and racial equality progress on the other? Events over the last two years have put this question into sharp relief. On the one hand, portions of the general public and at least some policymakers have signaled support for the demands of racial justice activists to reduce and eliminate systemic racism after too many tragedies of police brutality against the Black community have made painfully obvious that such systemic racism continues. At the same time, the country is perhaps more politically divided than ever before, the racial dimensions of this division are evident, and events since the 2020 election have shown that appetite for racial reform is by no means universal. In this environment, calls to “unify” and take time to “heal” as well as to “root out systemic racism” are made at the same time. Can these calls be realistically pursued at the same time or is there a need to prioritize one over the other? This is not just a question of policy but also of constitutional law. Over the last four decades, the Supreme Court’s equal protection jurisprudence on governmental race-consciousness has answered with an “antibalkanization approach” which prioritizes social cohesion. Indeed, this approach views

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1 It is the policy of the William & Mary Bill of Rights Journal to capitalize indicators of race such as “Black” and “White” in accordance with current journalistic standards. For more on why the Journal follows this policy see Ann Thúy Nguyênn & Maya Pendleton, Recognizing Race in Language: Why We Capitalize “Black” and “White”, CTR. STUDY SOC. POL’Y (Mar. 23, 2020), https://cssp.org/2020/03/recognizing-race-in-language-why-we-capitalize-black-and-white/.
social cohesion as a prerequisite for racial equality progress. It considers racial hostility and resentment among White Americans as the most important racial equality obstacle and polices governmental race-consciousness in an attempt to minimize such hostility and resentment. It believes that this is the only way to reach the constitutional ideal of racial equality. Many policymakers in the past have agreed. This Article posits that while this approach appears to be well-meaning and cares about some of the right kinds of considerations, it is ultimately flawed because it misunderstands the dynamics of racial inequality and racial hierarchy. The antibalkanization approach attempts to solve a structural problem with a “bad apple” approach—what Critical Race Theory scholars have called a perpetrator perspective. This Article goes in depth to illustrate both the inner workings of the antibalkanization approach and how social science research on the sociological and social psychological dimensions of racial hierarchy shows it to be flawed. The approach ought to be replaced by a more accurate model of racial equality progress that would view White racial hostility and resentment not as an obstacle but as a likely inevitable side effect of the path of structural change that is necessary for achieving both racial equality and social cohesion over the long term. Adopting such a structural understanding of racial hostility and resentment would have important implications for both policymakers and for the Court.

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INTRODUCTION

Events over the last two years have put the following into sharp relief: (1) Americans are polarized and divided over what is right and wrong, and they view members of “the other side” with hostility;\(^2\) and (2) race remains a major factor in those divisions and hostilities,\(^3\) and racism and racial inequality fail to abate.\(^4\) Unsurprisingly, ...
then, in his speech after his election victory president-elect Joe Biden spoke about the need to address both issues and suggested that his administration would pursue the following solutions: As to (1) seek “not to divide but unify” by “put[ting] away the harsh rhetoric, lower[ing] the temperature,” and finding “time to heal”; 5 and (2) wage a “battle to achieve racial justice and root out systemic racism.” 6 He has repeated similar themes in various contexts since then. 7


For example, Biden noted the apparent disparity in police treatment of protesters (many of which were people of color) during racial justice protests over the summer of 2020 and the mob (essentially all-White) that stormed the Capitol on January 6 and noted that this difference in treatment was both undeniable and “totally unacceptable.” See Annie Linskey, Chelsea Janes & Amy B. Wang, Biden Denounces Racial Inequities in Blasting Capitol Riot, WASH. POST (Jan. 7, 2021, 8:37 PM), https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/biden-racial-inequity-capitol-mob/2021/01/07/07d5961e-5112-11eb-b96e-0e54447b23a1_story.html [https://perma.cc/RMD2-6CQT]. But he has also separately reiterated his “overarching objective . . . to unify this country.” Joe Biden Introduces Economics & Labor Nominees Speech Transcript, REV (Jan. 8, 2021), https://www.revolvingdoorproject.org/blog/transcripts/joe-biden-introduces-economics-labor-nominees-speech-transcript [https://perma.cc/8QD4-7FL9]. More recently, Biden has criticized new voting restrictions that have been passed by Republican-led state legislatures and often predominantly burden voters of color as a type of “[twenty-first century Jim Crow assault]” that his administration would challenge. See Remarks by President Biden on Protecting the Sacred, Constitutional Right to Vote, THE WHITE HOUSE (July 13, 2021), https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/07/13/remarks-by-president-biden-on-protecting-the-sacred-constitutional-right-to-vote/ [https://perma.cc/7DVD-S6SJ]. At the same time, Biden has explained that his objections to eliminating the Senate filibuster to pass broad federal voting rights legislation are partially grounded in the belief that such a strategy would be inconsistent with his objective of “trying to bring the country together.” Chris Cillizza, Joe Biden (Still) Doesn’t Want to Get Rid of the Filibuster, CNN (July 22, 2021, 6:35 PM), https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/22/politics/biden-filibuster-senate/index.html [https://perma.cc/AN2F-E8D6].
Both goals—(1) avoiding division, conflict, and hostility, and (2) remedying systemic racism—seem eminently reasonable and important, especially in the current climate. But are they necessarily compatible? Or may pursuing one goal potentially clash with, and perhaps require limits on, the pursuit of the other? If the goals clash, choices about which goal to prioritize will have to be made. Racial justice activists have demanded loudly and clearly that systemic change toward racial justice must finally be prioritized. In various ways, Biden has signaled that he is sympathetic to such demands. However, history suggests that the perceived need for avoiding or curing disagreements among White Americans is usually prioritized over stated commitments to eradicating systemic racism when they clash.

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8 See, e.g., HANEY LÓPEZ, supra note 3, at 31–32, 198–204 (describing the “backlash” theory popular among Democratic Party establishment since at least the 1990s which suggests that if government “push[es] too fast with civil rights and the extension of liberal programs . . . a hostile eruption ineluctably follows” and thus counsels against decisive civil rights intervention, as well as similar views adopted under the banner of “post-racialism” during the Obama administration).

9 See, e.g., The Movement for Black Lives, Vision for Black Lives, M4BL, https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/ (last visited Mar. 28, 2022) (“In recent years, we have taken to the streets, launched massive campaigns, and impacted elections, but our elected leaders have failed to address the legitimate demands of our Movement. We can no longer wait.”).

10 For example, in his post-election victory speech, Biden explicitly recognized that overwhelming support from those most harmed by racial inequality, the Black community was indispensable to his election and called for reciprocal support from him: “[T]he African American community stood up again for me. You’ve always had my back, and I’ll have yours.” Phillips, supra note 5. Biden also signed an executive order titled “Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government” that specifically notes “the unbearable human costs of systemic racism” and calls on all agencies across the federal government to assess whether their policies impose systemic barriers for people of color and other underserved groups and to address those barriers. See Exec. Order 13985, 86 F.R. 7009 (2021).

checkered racial justice history continue to repeat itself\textsuperscript{12} as some signs seem to be indicating,\textsuperscript{13} or will things be different this time?

This Article argues that close evaluation of the Supreme Court’s constitutional racial equality jurisprudence of the last four decades offers important lessons that need to be learned and implemented—both by policymakers and by the Court itself—for things to be different this time. This jurisprudence has revolved precisely around the relationship between avoiding social division and conflict on the one hand, and eradicating America’s legacy of racism on the other. Specifically, an “antibalkanization” approach\textsuperscript{14} has driven the Court’s doctrinal answers\textsuperscript{15} to perhaps


\textsuperscript{13} See, e.g., Gambino, supra note 11.

\textsuperscript{14} That this approach exists and is a separate approach to race-related equal protection cases from the traditionally recognized “anticlassification” and “antisubordination” approaches was first proposed by Reva Siegel in 2011. Reva B. Siegel, From Colorblindness to Anti-balkanization: An Emerging Ground of Decision in Race Equality Cases, 120 YALE L.J. 1278 (2011); see also Jack M. Balkin & Reva B. Siegel, The American Civil Rights Tradition: Anticlassification or Antisubordination?, 58 U. MIA. L. REV. 9, 10–11 (2003) (describing the relationship between traditionally recognized approaches). Recognition of the antibalkanization approach was an important development in equal protection scholarship because it can help better explain certain features of current doctrine. For example, despite the assertiveness of claims to colorblindness and anticlassification in the opinions of many conservative Justices, certain types of affirmative action programs in higher education that explicitly rely on race as well as the practice of race-conscious redistricting remain constitutionally permissible. See, e.g., Fisher v. Univ. of Tex. (Fisher II), 136 S. Ct. 2198 (2016) (affirmative action in higher education); Bethune-Hill v. Va. State Bd. of Elections, 137 S. Ct. 788, 797 (2017) (redistricting); see also Neil S. Siegel, Race-Conscious Student Assignment Plans: Balkanization, Integration, and Individualized Consideration, 56 DUKE L.J. 781, 812 (2006) (“Colorblindness is not a reasonable interpretation of the case law because it collapses the context-sensitive continuum defined by the Court’s decisions.”). At the same time, and inconsistent with an antisubordination approach, the Supreme Court has made clear that all governmental uses of race, no matter who is benefitted or harmed by them, are subject to the most stringent judicial review in the form of strict scrutiny. See, e.g., Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña, 515 U.S. 200, 224 (1995). While some have proposed that these doctrinal features may simply reflect compromise between anticlassification and antisubordination in certain cases, others have argued that they are better explained by the existence of a freestanding antibalkanization approach. Compare, e.g., Samuel R. Bagenstos, Bottlenecks and Antidiscrimination Theory, 93 TEX. L. REV. 415, 417 (2014) (suggesting that “antibalkanization may be best understood as a pragmatic set of ad hoc compromises between anticlassification and antisubordination, rather than a theory on which to build antidiscrimination law”), with Derrick Darby & Richard E. Levy, Postracial Remedies, 50 U. MICH. J.L. REFORM 387, 484 (2016) (“[T]he pragmatism reflected in race moderates is a principled normative commitment to social cohesion, not merely a strategic one of negotiating a middle path between conservatives and progressives.”). I agree that antibalkanization is a freestanding approach and that in-depth analysis of its features holds critical insights for how to best accomplish the Constitution’s promise of racial equality.

\textsuperscript{15} While historically only a small number of Justices have used this approach, it is fair
the most controversial question of constitutional racial equality law: Are government actors permitted to rely on race as a factor when deciding how to distribute resources and opportunities in pursuit of racial equality—for example, via affirmative action programs, race-conscious redistricting, voluntary school desegregation programs, and the like—and if so, to what extent? The antibalkanization approach’s answer is an ambivalent “sometimes” and when the answer is yes versus no is fundamentally based on its proponents’ views about the relationship between racial conflict and racial equality progress.

Broadly speaking, the approach is built on the tension between its acknowledgment that racial inequality is a continuing problem that representative government should be empowered to address, and its conviction that “social cohesion is a prerequisite for equality.” In resolving this tension, the approach holds that the goals of avoiding racial conflict and eradicating racial inequality are not only compatible, but that achieving the goal of eradicating racial inequality essentially requires avoiding or minimizing race-based social conflict where possible. Because America’s history has made race an explosive topic and racial solidarity an existing but fragile phenomenon, minimizing race-based social conflict, in turn, requires extremely careful handling of governmental reliance on race as a distributive criterion: “Too much” emphasis on race must generally be prohibited because it is too likely to create counterproductive racial hostility and resentment, in particular among White Americans. More modest consideration of race that downplays its social importance, on
the other hand, is less likely to create racial hostility and resentment among Whites, and therefore is sometimes permitted.\textsuperscript{22} The overarching role that the antibalkanization approach sees for the Court is that of drawing the complex doctrinal “boundary lines”\textsuperscript{23} that allow the government to address the ongoing problem of racial inequality while preventing the government from creating counterproductive racial conflict and tension while doing so.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22} Such more modest consideration might include programs that consider race as only one factor among many others or programs that are race-conscious but facially race-neutral. See \textit{infra} Section I.D; see also Emerson, \textit{supra} note 15, at 199–203 (discussing role of salience in the antibalkanization approach); Yuvraj Joshi, \textit{Racial Indirection}, 52 U.C. DAVIS L. REV. 2495, 2528–29 (2019) (discussing use of “racial indirection” in the antibalkanization perspective).

\textsuperscript{23} Regents of Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke, 438 U.S. 265, 318 (1978) (“A boundary line [. . .] is none the worse for being narrow.” (internal quotation marks omitted) (quoting McLeod v. Dilworth, 322 U.S. 327, 329 (1944))).

Using insights from Critical Race Theory (CRT) and social science research, this Article argues that the antibalkanization approach exhibits a “frustrating duality” as a strategy for achieving greater racial equality: It has progressive potential, but, as actually implemented, it is decidedly regressive.

The approach’s progressive potential lies in the fact that its reasoning process incorporates many of the right considerations, and that it speaks to Justices who seem to apply this reasoning process with at least somewhat of an open mind. The


25 This quote alludes to Justice Kennedy’s reference to the “frustrating duality” of the Equal Protection Clause, but the “frustrating duality” this Article contemplates is quite different. Cf. Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 551 U.S. 701, 787 (2007) (Kennedy, J., concurring) (“The idea that if race is the problem, race is the instrument with which to solve it cannot be accepted as an analytical leap forward. And if this is a frustrating duality of the Equal Protection Clause it simply reflects the duality of our history and our attempts to promote freedom in a world that sometimes seems set against it.”).

26 See Reva B. Siegel, The Supreme Court, 2012 Term—Foreword: Equality Divided, 127 HARV. L. REV. 1, 43 n.211 (2013) (suggesting that antibalkanization reasoning may reflect “an instance of preservation through transformation” of existing status hierarchy); Darren Lenard Hutchinson, Preventing Balkanization or Facilitating Racial Domination?: A Critique of the New Equal Protection, 22 VA. J. SOC. POL’Y & L. 1, 9 (2015) (arguing that the Court’s equal protection jurisprudence “facilitates racial domination” in part because of how it incorporates concerns about balkanization).

27 That is, at a very general level, the approach considers many of the same dynamics in race relations that progressive scholars of equal protection also consider highly relevant to the proper pursuit of racial equality—for example, stereotyping, stigma, and racial division—and it does so in ways that do not seem disingenuous or purely results-driven. See infra Sections I.C, I.F.

28 That is, proponents show a seeming willingness to learn about the realities of race over their career and to take persistent racial inequality seriously beyond simplistic a priori ideological commitments. See infra Section I.F. While this willingness appears to be limited and to have gone down in extent with more recently appointed antibalkanization Justices, it does differentiate the approach from the anticlassification approach, whose proponents also
latter is demonstrated by proponents’ willingness to support race-conscious racial
equality initiatives later in their careers when their prior jurisprudence did not require
them to do so.29 Through this willingness, antibalkanization proponents have pre-
served important constitutional space for race-conscious racial equality initiatives
in a period of the Court’s history generally characterized by ascendant and aggressive
colorblindness ideology.30

And yet, the approach’s regressive reality lies in the fact that this progressive
potential has been compromised by the approach’s flawed baseline assumptions
about the nature and dynamics of racial inequality.31 These flawed assumptions, in
turn, lead the approach to put in place flawed prescriptions for how to facilitate racial
equality progress.32 Specifically, the approach proceeds from a version of what CRT
scholars have called the “perpetrator perspective” of racial discrimination,33 which
has three basic characteristics: (1) a baseline view that absent strong evidence to the
contrary in a particular context, American society is presumptively racially egalitar-
ian; (2) a conviction that deviations from racial equality are primarily caused by the
specific actions of blameworthy individual actors who are violating this shared norm;
and (3) a conclusion that therefore the main purpose of racial equality law is to
police and prevent the inappropriate behavior of such perpetrators.34 CRT scholars
have criticized this perspective because (1) it misrepresents actual baseline realities
include some of the same racial equality dynamics in their reasoning, but the way in which
despite the reluctance to resist the conclusion that they are merely justifying pre-existing
ideological objections to race-conscious racial equality efforts. See id.

29 See id. The existing literature has not yet uncovered this internal progression in the
jurisprudence of antibalkanization proponents. It thus misses this aspect of the approach’s
progressive potential.
31 See infra Part II.
32 See infra Part III.
33 For the classic formulation of this perspective and an argument that it underlies constitu-
tional discriminatory intent doctrine, see Alan David Freeman, Legitimizing Racial Discrimina-
tion through Antidiscrimination Law: A Critical Review of Supreme Court Doctrine, 62 MINN. L. REV. 1049 (1978). For an application in the Fourth Amendment context, see Devon
W. Carbado, (E)racing the Fourth Amendment, 100 MICH. L. REV. 946 (2002).
34 See, e.g., Freeman, supra note 33, at 1054 (“From [the perpetrator] perspective, the law
views racial discrimination not as a social phenomenon, but merely as the misguided conduct
of particular actors. It is a world where, but for the conduct of these misguided ones, the
system of equality of opportunity would work to provide a distribution of the good things in
life without racial disparities and where deprivations that did correlate with race would be
‘deserved’ by those deprived on grounds of insufficient ‘merit.’ . . . [T]he task of antidiscrimina-
tion law is to separate from the masses of society those blameworthy individuals who are
violating the otherwise shared norm.”); Carbado, supra note 33, at 968 (Fourth Amendment
discipline “reflects a perpetrator perspective in the sense that race becomes doctrinally relevant
only to the extent that the presumption of race neutrality and colorblindness can be rebutted
by specific evidence that a particular police officer exhibits overtly racist behavior—in other
words, is obviously a perpetrator of racism.”).
of deep racial inequality;\textsuperscript{35} (2) this inequality is perpetuated to a significant extent by deep-seated structural forces that operate independently of blameworthy conduct by specific ill-intentioned actors; and (3) racial equality law must thus incorporate structural interventions if it is to be effective.\textsuperscript{36}

In trying to navigate the relationship between racial conflict and race-conscious government action, the antibalkanization approach replicates the basic characteristics of the perpetrator perspective and thus is subject to similar critiques. This Article sets out both aspects in detail.

As for replicating the perpetrator perspective, the approach (1) assumes as a baseline view that white Americans are committed to racial equality progress (if in a fragile way) and will generally accept racial equality interventions without hostility and resentment (so long as the government structures them properly);\textsuperscript{37} (2) reasons that racial hostility and resentment among white Americans results primarily from overzealous or sloppy reliance on race by the government—i.e., when the government acts as a “racial hostility perpetrator”\textsuperscript{38} and (3) as a result, strictly restricts race-conscious equality initiatives to those in which it considers the government not to be acting as such a perpetrator.\textsuperscript{39} The approach is particularly restrictive toward initiatives with a remedial purpose, which it views as especially likely to cause racial hostility and resentment.\textsuperscript{40}

However: (1) As social science research illustrates, a baseline assumption that white Americans will accept racial equality interventions without hostility and resentment is not justified.\textsuperscript{41} (2) This is because White racial hostility and resentment is to a significant extent a structural phenomenon that is tied to the dynamics of racial hierarchy. It is triggered by threats to the dominant position of Whites in the hierarchy and is not dependent on any governmental perpetrator.\textsuperscript{42} (3) Thus, if part of the goal


\textsuperscript{36} See, e.g., Devon W. Carbado & Daria Roithmayr, Critical Race Theory Meets Social Science, 10 ANN. REV. L. SOC. SCI. 149, 159 (2014) (explaining CRT position that “racial disparities cannot be fully reduced to or predicted from individual behavior and are instead a function of structural forces” and noting that “[t]he effects of remedial approaches that focus on individuals can be quite pernicious”); Haney López, supra note 21, at 8 (“Because race exists as an integral, structural component of social reality and human relations, racial remediation is impossible except in the company of wide-ranging social reform and human advancement.”).

\textsuperscript{37} See infra Section I.B.

\textsuperscript{38} See infra Section I.C.

\textsuperscript{39} See infra Section I.D.

\textsuperscript{40} See infra id.

\textsuperscript{41} See infra Sections II.A, II.C.

\textsuperscript{42} See infra Sections II.A, II.B.
of equal protection doctrine is to facilitate movement toward a society that features both racial equality and social cohesion, it should incorporate more discretion, not less, for government actors pursuing structural changes to the conditions of racial hierarchy. Most prominently, this includes programs with a remedial rationale.43

Laying bare the frustrating duality of the antibalkanization approach helps strengthen existing critiques of the approach. The most notable existing critiques are (1) a racial partiality critique based on the fact that the Court has applied its concerns about cohesion only to issues that create possible resentments among White Americans;44 and (2) a critique that as a result of its focus on reducing the salience of race in racial equality policymaking, the approach is in conflict with democratic principles of transparency and accountability.45 The analysis offered in this Article gives these critiques and their proposed solutions a firmer theoretical foundation. With respect to racial partiality, understanding that the approach is grounded in a flawed perpetrator perspective makes clear that, as currently formulated, the approach fails even in its analysis of White resentment. It also suggests that a willingness to adopt the proposed solution to this partiality—also applying the approach to issues of concern to racial minorities46—is analytically dependent on a prior willingness to replace the perpetrator perspective with its opposite: a “victim perspective.”47

43 See infra Part III.
44 I call these issues the approach’s “core territory.” This territory covers contexts in which the government voluntarily uses racial minority group membership as a positive factor in resource distributions, such as in affirmative action programs; or in a way meant to ensure that the interests of racial minority group members are adequately protected, such as in race-conscious districting. See Siegel, supra note 14, at 1359 (noting that currently “anti-balkanization opinions [seem to] focus exclusively . . . on the constitutionality of civil rights laws and initiatives”). One might distinguish this “core territory” from the approach’s broader hypothetical “logical territory” that would include all government uses of race that may cause resentment, including among racial minorities, such as racial profiling. See, e.g., Joshi, supra note 22, at 2529–31; Siegel, supra note 26, at 42–50, 93; Siegel, supra note 14, at 1359. A related racial partiality critique is that in its balkanization-based arguments, the Court has inappropriately adopted the specific viewpoints of White Americans over conflicting viewpoints of people of color on important issues in equal protection doctrine. See Hutchinson, supra note 26, at 48–55.
45 See Emerson, supra note 15, at 208–10. While discussing the approach only briefly, Kiel Brennan-Marquez similarly argues that it mistakenly elevates form over substance and may be perceived as disingenuous or dishonest as a result. Kiel Brennan-Marquez, Magic Words, 23 WM. & MARY BILL RTS. J. 759, 782–83 (2015).
46 See, e.g., Siegel, supra note 14, at 1362–65 (criminal suspect descriptions); Siegel, supra note 26, at 93–94 (stop and frisk and suspect apprehension).
47 See, e.g., Carbado, supra note 33, at 970 (advocating shift from perpetrator to victim perspective to ensure that Fourth Amendment law, including with respect to racial profiling, becomes sensitive to the fact that “people of color often experience their race as a crime of identity” and to “the coercive and disciplinary ways in which race structures the interaction between police officers and nonwhite persons”).
With respect to the approach’s transparency deficit, the ability to convince anti-balkanization proponents to accept more open engagement with issues of race in policymaking is dependent on making a strong case that the approach’s focus on reducing the salience of race has failed not because of poor implementation, but because it is mistaken in its fundamental assumptions. This Article makes that case.

Perhaps more importantly, recognizing the approach’s frustrating duality uncovers important implications for actors with an interest in contributing to racial equality progress. Most broadly, understanding the flaws of the approach’s perpetrator perspective undermines the assumption “that social cohesion is a prerequisite for equality.” It suggests instead that while racial solidarity and social cohesion are valuable long-term goals for American society, reaching these goals will likely require accepting short-term racial tension as a necessary corollary of the path of structural change that needs to be traveled. For policymakers such as the Biden administration, this means that progress toward truly accomplishing the goal of “root[ing] out systemic racism” will require a break from the past practice of prioritizing white harmony over decisive structural intervention in the hopes that racial equality progress will organically materialize on its own over time. The prospect of reactionary white racial hostility and resentment, in other words, should not cause a pulling back from decisive structural interventions.

For the Court, a number of lessons seem clear, though their likelihood of being adopted will depend on the Court’s ideological rigidity, especially after its most recent changes in composition. Most directly related to this Article’s analysis, the Court should adjust equal protection doctrine to give more discretion to government actors who voluntarily implement race-conscious programs with a remedial rationale. This change is of urgent importance: Pushed by social movement activism as part of the ongoing reckoning over race and policing, government actors around

48 See Emerson, supra note 15, at 223–31 (calling for administrative law approach to equal protection); Brennan-Marquez, supra note 45, at 783 (calling for approach to equal protection that focuses on substance rather than form of race-conscious intervention).

49 Cf. Emerson, supra note 15, at 207–08 (noting correctly that “[i]n the years since [the] approach has been embraced, racial tensions have not abated” but not investigating in depth why this has been so).

50 See infra Part III.

51 Siegel, supra note 14, at 1350.

52 Social science research on the “irony of harmony” supports this point. See infra Part III.

53 See Phillips, supra note 5.

54 See supra notes 8, 11.

55 See, e.g., Joshi, supra note 22, at 2560–61 (projecting the “prospect of a durable conservative majority on the Supreme Court” and suggesting that “[t]he question is no longer whether but when and how a post-Kennedy Court will break with the constitutional precedent established in Bakke and its progeny”). Since Joshi’s projection, the Court tilted even further in the conservative direction with Justice Barrett’s replacement of the late Justice Ginsburg.

56 See infra notes 349–78 and accompanying text.
the country may be both motivated to implement such remedial programs and yet deterred by the Court’s restrictive jurisprudence. At a minimum, members of the Court’s conservative majority who share the antibalkanization approach’s willingness to learn about the dynamics of race should vote to preserve the fragile status quo that permits some race-consciousness in higher education and redistricting as new challenges to these practices return to the Court. If, as is perhaps most likely, the Court will pull back from race-consciousness instead, this Article makes plain the deleterious consequences of such a choice for both long-term racial equality and social cohesion. If it is true that to protect its own legitimacy the Court often tries to predict and stay in line with society’s long-term values, both social activism and legal scholarship have a role to play in describing what those values could and should be and how legal doctrine could effectively be reconciled with them. This has been a project of CRT for three decades now. Will these calls be heard when it matters most? Scholars such as Derrick Bell have raised grave doubts. But as a saying in my native German language goes: “Die Hoffnung stirbt zuletzt.” Hope dies last. This Article suggests that there are some reasons for hope, small as they may be. Fueling this hope and holding those who could take it up but refuse to do so accountable should be a worthwhile endeavor in legal scholarship.

This Article proceeds in three main parts. Part I describes the antibalkanization approach in depth to uncover both parts of its frustrating duality: its regressive


58 See infra Part II.

59 See, e.g., Robert Post & Reva Siegel, Roe Rage: Democratic Constitutionalism and Backlash, 42 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 373, 383 (2007) (“It is a commonplace of history and political science that . . . in the long run, our constitutional law is plainly susceptible to political influence.”).

60 See CRITICAL RACE THEORY: THE KEY WRITINGS THAT FORMED THE MOVEMENT xiii (Kimberle Crenshaw et al. eds., 1995) (“Although Critical Race scholarship differs in object, argument, accent, and emphasis, it is nevertheless unified by two common interests. The first is to understand how a regime of White supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America, and, in particular, to examine the relationship between that social structure and professed ideals such as ‘the rule of law’ and ‘equal protection.’ The second is a desire not merely to understand the vexed bond between law and racial power but to change it.”).


62 Bell, Racial Realism, at 378 (“Continued struggle can bring about unexpected benefits and gains that in themselves justify continued endeavor. The fight in itself has meaning and should give us hope for the future.”).
grounding in a perpetrator perspective but also the component parts of its progressive potential. Part II turns to social science research to demonstrate the flaws of the approach’s perpetrator perspective and to illustrate the structural dimensions of White racial hostility and resentment. Part III discusses implications.

I. ANTIBALKANIZATION ASSUMPTIONS—RACE-CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE GOVERNMENT AS A RACIAL HOSTILITY PERPETRATOR

This Part describes in greater detail than prior scholarship the multistep logic of the antibalkanization approach to uncover its “frustrating duality.” To situate this analysis, a brief terminological point: The name “antibalkanization” approach might suggest that the approach’s main concern is racial division.63 While racial division is a significant concern for the approach, it is only one among others, including: stereotyping; “racial politics”; stigmatization; and, most crucially, racial hostility and resentment.64 To fully understand the approach it is important to see how the approach views these issues as connected in what I call a “bias cascade.”65 The approach attends to this cascade closely because it views it as the major obstacle (though one that can sometimes be overcome) to the accomplishment of its underlying racial equality goal.

63 This risk is closest to the epistemological origin of the term balkanization, which alludes to the violent break-up of Yugoslavia (a former nation state in the region of the world often called the “Balkans”) into multiple states and the tragic ethnic conflict that accompanied it. Justices have warned that a similar risk of racial division is associated with governmental uses of race and have made specific reference to the term “balkanization” in the context of race-conscious redistricting. See Pamela S. Karlan, Our Separatism? Voting Rights as an American Nationalities Policy, 1995 U. CHI. LEGAL F. 83, 92 (1995). As described below, however, the Court has warned of the risk of racial division in other doctrinal contexts as well.

64 Many of these concepts have been analyzed by strict scrutiny literature as potential “constitutional harms” that the Court has used to both justify its conclusion that racial classifications by the government must be analyzed under strict scrutiny, and to evaluate when a government’s use of race is sufficiently important and precise to survive strict scrutiny. See, e.g., Elizabeth S. Anderson, Integration, Affirmative Action, and Strict Scrutiny, 77 N.Y.U. L. REV. 1195 (2002); Peter J. Rubin, Reconnecting Doctrine and Purpose: A Comprehensive Approach to Strict Scrutiny after Adarand and Shaw, 149 U. PA. L. REV. 1 (2000); Kim Forde-Mazrui, The Constitutional Implications of Race-Neutral Affirmative Action, 88 GEO. L.J. 2331 (2000); Jed Rubenfeld, Affirmative Action, 107 YALE L.J. 427 (1997); Michael J. Perry, Modern Equal Protection: A Conceptualization and Appraisal, 79 COLUM. L. REV. 1023 (1979). But this literature tends to analyze these harms as individual and independent concerns, whereas this Part illustrates how the antibalkanization approach is most concerned with their interaction in a “bias cascade.”

65 My use of this term is loosely derived from Cass Sunstein’s analysis of the related phenomenon of “backlash” and its influence on judicial decision-making. See generally Cass R. Sunstein, If People Would Be Outraged by Their Rulings, Should Judges Care?, 60 STAN. L. REV. 155 (2007) (discussing relevance of systemic bias and informational cascades); Cass R. Sunstein, Backlash’s Travels, 42 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 435 (2007).
A. The Racial Equality Goal: Substantive Equal Opportunity

The antibalkanization approach pursues as its stated end-goal an ideal of racial equality that is comparatively progressive. It goes beyond the vision of equal protection generally associated with the anticlassification approach, which demands mere formal equal treatment.66 Instead, it pursues a genuine equal opportunity society—that is, “a Nation of equal citizens in a society where race is irrelevant to personal opportunity and achievement.”67 Different Justices have formulated this goal in different ways depending on the circumstances,68 but the formulations all share similarities with the goal expressed in 1978 by perhaps the foremost proponent of antisuordination on the Court, Justice Marshall: “a fully integrated society, one in which the color of a person’s skin will not determine the opportunities available to him or her.”69 I call this end goal “substantive equal opportunity.”70

Crucially, antibalkanization Justices are clear about their conviction that American society has not yet reached this end-goal. It is “a society . . . in which race unfortunately still matters,”71 and in which it is an “unfortunate fact that irrational racial

66 This vision of equality is encapsulated in the often-quoted syllogism of Chief Justice Roberts that “[t]he way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.” Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 551 U.S. 701, 748 (2007).
68 Justice Kennedy, for example, has spoken of the nation’s “moral and ethical obligation to fulfill its historic commitment to creating an integrated society that ensures equal opportunity for all of its children” in the school desegregation context. Parents Involved, 551 U.S. at 797 (Kennedy, J., concurring). Justice Stevens has expressed his desire for a “time when race will become a truly irrelevant, or at least insignificant, factor” in determining people’s business success in the context of public contracting. Fullilove v. Klutznick, 448 U.S. 448, 545 (1980) (Stevens, J., dissenting). Both Justices O’Connor and Kennedy have noted the “goal of a political system in which race no longer matters—a goal that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments embody, and to which the Nation continues to aspire,” in the voting rights context. Shaw v. Reno, 509 U.S. 630, 657 (1993) (opinion of O’Connor, J.); Miller v. Johnson, 515 U.S. 900, 912 (1995) (opinion of Kennedy, J.). Similarly, Justice O’Connor has noted that “[a]s a Nation we aspire to create a society untouched by [America’s] history of exclusion, and to ensure that equality defines all citizens’ daily experience and opportunities as well as the protection afforded to them under law.” Metro Broad., Inc. v. F.C.C., 497 U.S. 547, 611 (1990) (O’Connor, J., dissenting).
70 One can, of course, question whether Justices are ultimately pursuing the goals that they state in their opinions. See, e.g., Rubenfeld, supra note 64, at 451 (arguing that the way in which strict scrutiny has been applied by the Court suggests that the Court is not pursuing the purposes it says underlie the doctrine). For purposes of this Article, I take the Justices’ proclamations at face value to inquire whether their doctrinal choices, and the justifications for those choices, are well-designed to accomplish their stated end-goal.
71 Grutter v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. 306, 333 (2003); see also Parents Involved, 551 U.S. at 787 (Kennedy, J., concurring) (“The enduring hope is that race should not matter; the reality is that too often it does.”).
prejudice—along with its lingering effects—still survives.” Thus, the question whether government actors may rely on race in efforts that try to overcome this persisting racial inequality is squarely raised. The antibalkanization approach has developed its own unique answer—dissatisfied with both anticlassification Justices’ claim that the only sure way to guarantee racial equality is to immediately cease all reliance on race; and antisubordination Justices’ claim that “[i]n order to get beyond racism, we must first take account of race. . . . [a]nd in order to treat some persons equally, we must treat them differently.” In this unique answer, ideas about how governmental racial equality interventions cause people to relate to each other—either positively in ways that foster social cohesion or negatively in ways that foster racial hostility and resentment—take center stage. The way in which the approach implements these ideas can only be understood fully, however, in the context of basic assumptions the approach makes about American democracy and about how progress toward greater racial equality can and cannot be achieved within it.

B. Basic Assumptions About Race Relations and Democracy

Proponents of the approach understand American democracy as one in which “[t]he enduring hope is that race should not matter” but “the reality is that too often it does.” Still, the approach views American democracy as a “responsible, functioning” one with “the capacity—and the duty—to learn from its past mistakes; to discover and confront persisting biases.” In this democracy, well-meaning people will “by respectful, rational deliberation . . . rise above those flaws and injustices” if only they are put into the right (or at least not into the wrong) environments by the government through its laws. In other words, American democracy is at a stage of development where there is a basic commitment to racial equality, including by White Americans, but because of the country’s difficult racial history, this commitment

73 Bakke, 438 U.S. at 407 (opinion of Blackmun, J.).
74 Parents Involved, 551 U.S. at 787 (Kennedy, J., concurring).
76 Id. at 313.
77 Id. See also id. (“It is demeaning to the democratic process to presume that the voters are not capable of deciding an issue of this sensitivity on decent and rational grounds.”); see also Joshua S. Sellers, Election Law and White Identity Politics, 87 FORDHAM L. REV. 1515, 1560 (2019) (noting that the decision in Schuette was grounded in a view of the anti-affirmative action referendum at issue being “the manifestation of a healthy democracy” and more generally noting that “optimism pervades election law jurisprudence”).
78 This commitment is reflected in the approach’s view that “it is appropriate to presume that [antidiscrimination] law has generally been obeyed.” Fullilove v. Klutznick, 448 U.S. 448, 538, 540 (1980) (Stevens, J., dissenting); see also Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co., 488 U.S. 469, 501 & n.3 (rejecting “unsupported assumption that white prime contractors simply will not hire minority firms” and noting that the government had “point[ed] to no evidence that its prime contractors ha[d] been violating [a pre-existing] antidiscrimination ordinance”).
is perpetually fragile. There is a “race-consciousness” that is generally only “latent,” but which also sits ready to be “stimulate[d]” at any time.\textsuperscript{79}

In this context, the way in which the government employs its lawmaking power in the service of racial equality plays a crucial role in either supporting or obstructing the ability of American “society . . . to continue to progress as a multiracial democracy.”\textsuperscript{80} This is because, if well-executed, “the law dispels fears and preconceptions respecting racial attitudes” “[b]y the dispassionate analysis which is its special distinction.”\textsuperscript{81} But if poorly executed, it can “foster intolerance and antagonism,”\textsuperscript{82} “exacerbate rather than reduce racial prejudice,” and thereby “delay the time when race will become a truly irrelevant, or at least insignificant, factor.”\textsuperscript{83} Thus, the stakes for judicial evaluation of government interventions into the racial equality process are high. Racial harmony is conducive to racial equality progress, but racial conflict is not\textsuperscript{84}—indeed, such conflict “is at war with the democratic ideal.”\textsuperscript{85} The key to racial equality progress, then, is to prevent the government from becoming a “racial hostility perpetrator” that subverts the basic but fragile equality commitments of white Americans via poorly designed and off-putting racial equality measures. The approach thus sees its duty as that of “channeling” government action toward interventions that ensure racial harmony, and away from interventions that cause racial conflict.\textsuperscript{86} Its overall goal is to ensure that the government puts well-meaning people into harmonious environments that jumpstart the process toward greater racial equality instead of reigniting the racial antagonisms that have poisoned race relations in the past.

As described below, in pursuing this goal, antibalkanization proponents follow a reasoning process that incorporates many issues that progressive scholars of equal protection also consider highly relevant to the proper pursuit of racial equality—including stereotyping, stigmatization, and racial division. But they fail to incorporate these issues into a structural approach, instead remaining trapped in a flawed perpetrator perspective of what causes racial hostility and resentment among White


\textsuperscript{81} Id. at 631.

\textsuperscript{82} Fullilove, 448 U.S. at 546 (Stevens, J., dissenting).

\textsuperscript{83} Id.

\textsuperscript{84} See Schuette v. Coal. to Def. Affirmative Action, 572 U.S. 291, 310 (2014) (“In the realm of policy discussions the regular give-and-take of debate ought to be a context in which rancor or discord based on race is avoided, not invited.”).


\textsuperscript{86} Siegel, supra note 14, at 1302–33 (“Antibalkanization vindicates constitutional values by authorizing representative institutions to promote equality, while imposing on courts responsibility for constraining the form of political interventions so as to ameliorate resentments they may engender. Antibalkanization thus understands the judicial role not as mandating or managing, but as channeling constitutional politics that vindicate equality values.”).
Americans. As a result, the approach falls short in identifying those legal interventions that are necessary to effectively combat America’s persistent racial hierarchy and create a true equal opportunity society—indeed, it undermines the constitutionality of such interventions.

C. How to Be a Racial Hostility Perpetrator

1. The Source of All Problems: Classifications and Equivalents

The key starting point of the approach is its ambivalent position on racial classifications. On the one hand, proponents believe that the government should not be completely prohibited from taking race into consideration when distributing benefits and burdens.\textsuperscript{87} The approach recognizes the long-standing history of race-based discrimination against racial minorities that has created problems which government actors should not be required to ignore.\textsuperscript{88}

At the same time, this history has also created an environment in which calling attention to race comes with certain risks and encourages biased behaviors, explained in more detail below, that make it particularly likely that when the government relies on race it will become a “racial hostility perpetrator.” Antibalkanization proponents therefore conclude that there should be deep judicial “skepticism”\textsuperscript{89} whenever the government uses race “too much” in distributing benefits and burdens.\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{87} See, e.g., \textit{Schuette}, 572 U.S. at 300 (recognizing “the principle that the consideration of race in admissions is permissible, provided that certain conditions are met”); \textit{Shaw}, 509 U.S. at 642 (“This Court never has held that race-conscious state decisionmaking is impermissible in all circumstances.”).

\textsuperscript{88} See, e.g., \textit{Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña}, 515 U.S. 200, 237 (1995) (“The unhappy persistence of both the practice and the lingering effects of racial discrimination against minority groups in this country is an unfortunate reality, and government is not disqualified from acting in response to it.”).

\textsuperscript{89} Id. at 223.

\textsuperscript{90} “Too much” in this context could mean too “extensively” to the exclusion of other relevant factors, a problem which scholars have called “value reductionism.” See, e.g., Richard H. Pildes & Richard G. Niemi, \textit{Expressive Harms, “Bizarre Districts,” and Voting Rights: Evaluating Election-District Appearances After Shaw v. Reno}, 92 MICH. L. REV. 483, 500 (1993) (“When decisions reflect value reductionism, policymakers have transformed a decision process that ought to involve multiple values—as a matter of constitutional law—and reduced it to a one-dimensional problem. They have permitted one value to subordinate all other relevant values.”). It could also mean too “obviously.” See, e.g., Emerson, supra note 15, at 199–202 (arguing that the key concern is whether the use of race is “too obvious and transparent to the affected public”). As Neil Siegel suggests, both concerns circulate in the case law. Neil S. Siegel, \textit{Race-Conscious Student Assignment Plans: Balkanization, Integration, and Individualized Consideration}, 56 DUKE L.J. 781, 805 (2006) (Relevant case law “insists that government not overuse race: it must not treat individuals ‘too much’ as members of racial groups, whether by literally overusing race or by needlessly impressing upon them and others that it is treating them in part as members of racial groups” and the
This concern is most decisively triggered when the government relies on explicit racial classifications—a notoriously vague concept that at a general level means that the government uses racial categories as part of its explicitly stated decision-making criteria. Racial classifications that are applied on an individual by individual basis are considered to be particularly problematic. However, the Court has also raised similar concerns when governmental decision-making is facially race-neutral but viewed by the Court as the equivalent of an explicit classification because of the extent to which it is influenced by racial considerations. This is the case when race becomes the “predominant factor” in governmental decision-making.

“key consideration” in determining what is too much “is the Court’s judgment about how government’s use of race is likely to impact racial balkanization in America over the long run.”).

91 See, e.g., Regents of Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke, 438 U.S. 265, 289 (1978) (“The special admissions program is undeniably a classification based on race and ethnic background. To the extent that there existed a pool of at least minimally qualified minority applicants to fill the 16 special admissions seats, white applicants could compete only for 84 seats in the entering class, rather than the 100 open to minority applicants. Whether this limitation is described as a quota or a goal, it is a line drawn on the basis of race and ethnic status.”). The Court has not clearly defined the concept or given it consistent meaning. See, e.g., Siegel, supra note 14, at 1361–62 (noting that “to date, the Court has never defined what a racial classification is”); Samuel R. Bagenstos, Disparate Impact and the Role of Classification and Motivation in Equal Protection Law after Inclusive Communities, 101 CORNELL L. REV. 1115, 1158 n.222 (2016) (noting “ambiguity in what constitutes a ‘classification’”). The broad definition I use here is not intended to take a position on any “true” meaning of the term, but simply to capture the Court’s usage.

92 See, e.g., Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 551 U.S. 701, 795 (2007) (Kennedy, J., concurring) (“Reduction of an individual to an assigned racial identity for differential treatment is among the most pernicious actions our government can undertake.”).

93 Stephen Rich calls this “inferred classifications,” which he defines as facially race-neutral actions that the Court believes threaten the same constitutional equality values as an explicit racial classification. See Stephen M. Rich, Inferred Classifications, 99 VA. L. REV. 1525, 1531–32, 1560 (2013).

94 The use of race as a “predominant factor” has been a particular issue in the redistricting context, where the Court has recognized that in drawing facially race-neutral district lines, “legislatures will . . . almost always be aware of racial demographics.” Miller v. Johnson, 515 U.S. 900, 915 (1995); see also Pamela S. Karlan, Easing the Spring: Strict Scrutiny and Affirmative Action After the Redistricting Cases, 43 WM. & MARY L. REV. 1569, 1602 (2002) (noting that redistricting is “formally race neutral in the sense that the lines on the map contain no racial references at all”). However, once race becomes the “predominant factor” in the process, the Court considers it a “racial gerrymander” to which it must apply strict scrutiny (and often strike it down). Miller, 515 U.S. at 912, 916; see also Shaw v. Hunt, 517 U.S. 899, 905 (1996) (“The constitutional wrong occurs when race becomes the ‘dominant and controlling’ consideration.”). Still, antibalkanization opinions have raised similar concerns in other contexts as well. See, e.g., Grutter v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. 306, 392–93 (2003) (Kennedy, J., dissenting) (“[A]n educational institution must ensure, through sufficient procedures, that each applicant receives individual consideration and that race does not become a predominant factor in the admissions decisionmaking.”).
The initial doctrinal consequence of a finding that the government used an explicit racial classification or its facially race-neutral equivalent is that the Court will apply “strict scrutiny,” the most difficult-to-meet constitutional test.\(^{95}\) Whether a particular use of race is truly “too much,” in the sense that it becomes unconstitutional, is then determined by applying strict scrutiny. The specific way in which the approach applies strict scrutiny is discussed in more detail below.\(^{96}\) For now, the takeaway is that under the approach everything turns on whether the government uses race “too much.” When it does, the government becomes a presumptive racial hostility perpetrator by starting the bias cascade described below that ultimately prevents progress toward substantive equal opportunity by causing counterproductive racial hostility and resentment. Therefore, unless the government can overcome this presumption\(^{97}\) by showing that it was not such a perpetrator in a given instance—because it structured its use of race carefully in a way that interrupts the cascade before it leads to racial hostility and resentment—the use of race must be prohibited in the name of racial equality itself. When no classification or equivalent is used, by contrast, a more deferential test applies\(^{98}\) because the government is viewed as unlikely to be stimulating racial hostility and resentment.

2. Internal Bias: The Government’s Own Stereotyping and “Racial Politics”

Why would the mere fact that the government used a racial classification presumptively turn the government into a racial hostility perpetrator? At the most basic level, antibalkanization proponents believe that “[b]ecause racial characteristics so seldom provide a relevant basis for disparate treatment,”\(^{99}\) their use is inherently

\(^{95}\) See, e.g., Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña, 515 U.S. 200, 227 (1995) (“[A]ll racial classifications, imposed by whatever federal, state, or local governmental actor, must be analyzed by a reviewing court under strict scrutiny.”); Miller, 515 U.S. at 919–20 (“Race was . . . the predominant, overriding factor [in redistricting]. As a result, Georgia’s congressional redistricting plan cannot be upheld unless it satisfies strict scrutiny.”).

\(^{96}\) See infra Section I.D.

\(^{97}\) To be clear, antibalkanization opinions do not explicitly reason in terms of such a presumption. My use of the term is as an analogy.

\(^{98}\) See, e.g., Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 551 U.S. 701, 789 (2007) (Kennedy, J., concurring) (stating that where school integration “mechanisms are race conscious but do not lead to different treatment based on a classification . . . it is unlikely [that they] would demand strict scrutiny to be found permissible”); Bush v. Vera, 517 U.S. 952, 959 (1996) (“For strict scrutiny to apply, the plaintiffs must prove that other, legitimate districting principles were ‘subordinated’ to race.”).

\(^{99}\) Fullilove v. Klutznick, 448 U.S. 448, 533–35 (1980) (Stevens, J., dissenting); see also Metro Broad., Inc. v. F.C.C., 497 U.S. 547, 604 (1990) (O’Connor, J., dissenting) (approvingly citing this language). This assumption has been challenged, especially from Justices following an antisubordination approach. See, e.g., Fullilove, 448 U.S. at 519 (Marshall, J., concurring) (“Because the consideration of race is relevant to remedying the continuing effects of past racial discrimination, and because governmental programs employing racial classifications
suspicious. Proponents have supported this conclusion with a variety of reasons, including that constitutional equality rights are individual, personal rights, and thus the only relevant considerations for government decisions should be individual attributes rather than group-level characteristics like race; that race has no relationship to individual merit, which ought to be the basis for governmental decision-making; that race is immutable and therefore reliance on race is unfair; and that the problematic history of race suggests that the government generally cannot be trusted to use race responsibly.

Why would a government actor make the problematic decision to use race anyway? The approach suggests that the likely answer is that the government is acting for remedial purposes can be crafted to avoid stigmatization, . . . such programs should not be subjected to conventional ‘strict scrutiny.’”)

100 See, e.g., Grutter v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. 306, 326 (2003) (“Because the Fourteenth Amendment ‘protect[s] persons, not groups,’ all ‘governmental action based on race—a group classification long recognized as in most circumstances irrelevant and therefore prohibited—should be subjected to detailed judicial inquiry to ensure that the personal right to equal protection of the laws has not been infringed.’”) (quoting Adarand, 515 U.S. at 227).

As Neil Siegel pointed out, this argument is not particularly convincing because providing individualized consideration to a person based on their personal attributes “is perfectly consistent with the consideration of group characteristics, including race. Government cannot govern through generally applicable laws without distinguishing among individuals based on group characteristics; the criteria—any criteria—are defined by groups.” Siegel, supra note 90, at 789. Instead, the “task is to decide which criteria are relevant to government’s choices among individuals.” Id. at 790 (emphasis added). I mention this argument not because I agree with it, but to illustrate the bases antibalkanization proponents have raised for their suspicion against racial classifications.

102 See, e.g., Fullilove, 448 U.S. at 496 (Powell, J., concurring) (“Racial classifications must be assessed under the most stringent level of review because immutable characteristics, which bear no relation to individual merit or need, are irrelevant to almost every governmental decision.”). For a more complex understanding of race and merit are related in complex ways, see, e.g., Devon W. Carbado, Kate M. Turetsky & Valerie Purdie-Vaughns, Privileged or Mismatched: The Lose-Lose Position of African Americans in the Affirmative Action Debate, 64 UCLA L. REV. DISC. 174 (2016).

on its own racial bias by engaging in racial stereotyping,\(^\text{104}\) which is likely to shade into undesirable “racial politics.” The approach’s concern about stereotyping is multifaceted and discussed further below. But the first important worry is that reliance on the group-level category of race indicates that the government is making improper generalizations about the individuals affected by its policies\(^\text{105}\): the government is treating citizens “as the product of their race, evaluating their thoughts and efforts—their very worth as citizens—according to a criterion barred to the Government by history and the Constitution.”\(^\text{106}\) In other words, the government’s use of race suggests that it assumes that all members of a particular racial group are alike in a given context\(^\text{107}\) when in reality “[t]he racial generalization inevitably does not apply to certain individuals, and those persons may legitimately claim that they have been judged according to their race rather than upon a relevant criterion.”\(^\text{108}\)

This general concern about government stereotyping is not necessarily disingenuous, and progressive scholars have also raised it as a potential racial equality obstacle in contexts that are in the approach’s core territory.\(^\text{109}\) The perhaps clearest example is the critique of “negative action” against Asian Americans in university admissions that may result from such stereotyping.\(^\text{110}\) My point here is limited. It is

\(^{104}\) See, e.g., Fullilove, 448 U.S. at 552–53 (Stevens, J., dissenting) (warning about “[t]he risk that habitual attitudes toward classes of persons, rather than analysis of the relevant characteristics of the class, will serve as a basis for a legislative classification”).

\(^{105}\) See, e.g., Metro Broad., 497 U.S. at 619 (O’Connor, J., dissenting) (noting that “essential equal protection principles . . . prohibit racial generalizations”); see also Forde-Mazrui, supra note 64, at 2355 (“By stereotypes, the Court seems to have in mind generalizations about a person or group of people based on their race.”).

\(^{106}\) Metro Broad., 497 U.S. at 604; see also Miller, 515 U.S. at 912 (approvingly quoting this language).

\(^{107}\) See, e.g., Miller, 515 U.S. at 911–12 (“When the State assigns voters on the basis of race, it engages in the offensive and demeaning assumption that voters of a particular race, because of their race, ‘think alike, share the same political interests, and will prefer the same candidates at the polls.’”) (internal citation omitted); Metro Broad., 497 U.S. at 632 (Kennedy, J., dissenting) (criticizing “the step, which itself should be forbidden, of enacting into law the stereotypical assumption that the race of owners is linked to broadcast content”).

\(^{108}\) Metro Broad., 497 U.S. at 620 (O’Connor, J., dissenting); see also Schuette v. Coal. to Def. Affirmative Action, 572 U.S. 291, 308 (2014) (“It cannot be entertained as a serious proposition that all individuals of the same race think alike.”).

\(^{109}\) There are, of course, many examples of governmental stereotyping that disadvantage racial minority groups outside of the core territory of the approach. The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II based on wholesale stereotyping of possible race-based “disloyalty” is a particularly infamous example. See, e.g., Sumi Cho, Redeeming Whiteness in the Shadow of Internment: Earl Warren, Brown, and a Theory of Racial Redemption, 40 B.C. L. REV. 73 (1998).

\(^{110}\) See, e.g., Jerry Kang, Negative Action Against Asian Americans: The Internal Instability of Dworkin’s Defense of Affirmative Action, 31 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 1, 3, 41 (1996) (defining negative action as “unfavorable treatment based on race, using the treatment of Whites as a basis for comparison” and discussing how negative action could arise in university admissions based on negative stereotyping of Asian Americans grounded in the
not that all governmental uses of race are the result of negative stereotyping, but simply that it need not be disingenuous for well-meaning antibalkanization Justices to be worried about governmental stereotyping in the approach’s core territory.

Why might the government behave in such a sloppy and problematic way? The approach assumes that there is a large risk that the reason is another type of bias: “racial politics,” meaning an attempt by members of particular racial groups to circumvent merit-based decision-making and “to negotiate ‘a piece of the action’ for its members.” Because racial politics embodies racial preference for its own sake, the Court must vigilantly guard against it. Most importantly for purposes of this Article, this is particularly the case because stereotyping and “racial politics” practiced by the government (or the appearance thereof) cascade onward into society more broadly and poison the intergroup harmony that the approach thinks is necessary for progress toward racial equality.

3. External Bias: Stereotyping by Others, Racial Division, Stigmatization

The approach worries that the actions of the government signal powerfully what kinds of thoughts and behaviors are right or wrong for people at large, and thus can

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“model minority” myth); Gabriel J. Chin et al., Beyond Self-Interest: Asian Pacific Americans Toward a Community of Justice, a Policy Analysis of Affirmative Action, 4 UCLA ASIAN PAC. AM. L.J. 129, 159 (1996) (“[I]n cases of proven racial disparities between APA and White admission rates, the causes have been either stereotypical treatment of APA applicants or other preferences, such as that for alumni children, who tend to be predominantly White.”).

111 Indeed, scholars who have critiqued negative action have made clear that such a critique does not necessitate opposing the government’s use of race in affirmative action programs. Kang, supra note 110, at 44–46; Chin et al., supra note 110, at 159–60.


113 See, e.g., Metro Broad., 497 U.S. at 615 (O’Connor, J., dissenting) (warning about the risk of “naked preferences for members of particular races” when racial classifications are used); Fullilove, 448 U.S. at 497 (Powell, J., concurring) (“[I]f a race-based set-aside merely expresses a congressional desire to prefer one racial or ethnic group over another, [it] violates the equal protection component in the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.”).

114 One of the most consistently cited quotes from an antibalkanization opinion is Justice O’Connor’s admonition in Croson that:

Absent searching judicial inquiry into the justification for . . . race-based measures, there is simply no way of determining what classifications are ‘benign’ or ‘remedial’ and what classifications are in fact motivated by illegitimate notions of racial inferiority or simple racial politics. Indeed, the purpose of strict scrutiny is to ‘smoke out’ illegitimate uses of race.

generate downstream social effects that go far beyond the government’s own direct sphere of influence. This concern is based partly on the idea noted above that the problematic history of race has created a “latent race consciousness”115 in American society. When the government calls attention to race through its actions, this consciousness can easily move from “latent” to “actual,” with problematic repercussions. Antibalkanization proponents believe that racial stereotyping and politicking by the government encourages people in general to also think of themselves and others in racial terms when they otherwise might not.116 That is, when the government uses race in its decision-making, this “endorse[s] race-based reasoning”117 and “reinforce[s] habitual ways of thinking in terms of classes instead of individuals.”118 And not only does it encourage such thinking, it legitimates it as well by “suggesting the utility and propriety of basing decisions on a factor that ideally bears no relationship to an individual’s worth or needs.”119 In other words, the government’s use of race turns it into a racial bias perpetrator by perpetuating and legitimating racial stereotyping in society at large. Again, this is not necessarily a disingenuous concern. Scholars have pointed to social science research that suggests that making race more salient may indeed at times call forth, reinforce, and/or perpetuate stereotypes of racial minority groups.120 This point is again limited, as many countervailing considerations are at play.121 But an antibalkanization Justice with an interest in “getting right” their racial equality jurisprudence could genuinely be concerned about the possible reinforcing of stereotypes when race is relied on in the distribution of resources and opportunities.

115 Shaw, 509 U.S. at 643.
116 Fullilove, 448 U.S. at 532 (Stevens, J., dissenting).
117 Metro Broad., 497 U.S. at 603 (O’Connor, J., dissenting).
118 Fullilove, 448 U.S. at 547 (Stevens, J., dissenting); see also Shaw, 509 U.S. at 647 (Race-conscious redistricting “reinforces the perception that members of the same racial group—regardless of their age, education, economic status, or the community in which they live—think alike, share the same political interests, and will prefer the same candidates at the polls.”) (emphasis added).
119 Shaw, 509 U.S. at 643.
121 For example, race-consciousness may simultaneously be necessary to create environments that facilitate the undoing of stereotypes. See, e.g., id. at 104–05; Elise C. Boddie, Critical Mass and the Paradox of Colorblind Individualism in Equal Protection, 17 U. PA. J. CONST. L. 781, 799 (2015). Similarly, the possibility that race-consciousness may reinforce stereotypes may not outweigh the fact that eliminating race-consciousness would be highly counterproductive to racial equality goals in the absence of more effective alternatives. Krieger, supra note 120, at 1276–1329.
The antibalkanization approach’s concern with stereotyping, moreover, is not put forth for its own sake. Instead, it is the foundation for worries that such cognitive biases have deeper implications by encouraging a vision of society that the approach otherwise sees in the past and prefers to keep there: a society characterized by racial division. As Justice Kennedy has put it: “Government action that classifies individuals on the basis of race . . . carries the danger of perpetuating the very racial divisions the polity seeks to transcend.”122 The approach is concerned that when people think about themselves and others in racial terms—as encouraged by the government—they consequently also conceive of society as separated into different racial “blocs”123 and define their interests and allegiances primarily at the racial bloc-level rather than at the narrower individual level or at a broader, societal level.124 This divided perception of society (produced by the government’s use of race)—which again progressive equality scholars have also identified as potentially problematic125—in turn risks taking stereotyping to the next, more pernicious, level of stigmatization.

Stigmatization pushes overbroad generalizations into the even more problematic territory of harmful social meanings ascribed on the basis of group identity.126 While

122 Schuette v. Coal. to Def. Affirmative Action, 572 U.S. 291, 308 (2014); see also Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 551 U.S. 701, 797 (2007) (Kennedy, J., concurring) (“Governmental classifications that command people to march in different directions based on racial typologies can cause a new divisiveness.”).
124 This concern has been made particularly explicit in the voting context, where opinions have warned that racial gerrymandering sends a “pernicious” message to elected representatives “that their primary obligation is to represent only the members of [a particular racial] group, rather than their constituency as a whole.” Shaw, 509 U.S. at 648. These opinions emphasize that electoral systems that send such messages are “a divisive force in a community, emphasizing differences between candidates and voters that are irrelevant in the constitutional sense” and threaten that “the multiracial, multireligious communities that our Constitution seeks to weld together as one become separatist.” Id. (quoting Wright v. Rockefeller, 376 U.S. 52, 66–67 (1964) (Douglas, J., dissenting)). But the concern has also been raised in other contexts. See, e.g., Schuette, 572 U.S. at 308–09 (rejecting interpretation of “political process” doctrine that would turn on whether issues “inure[] primarily to the benefit of [a racial] minority” because such doctrine would risk “the creation of incentives for those who support or oppose certain policies to cast the debate in terms of racial advantage or disadvantage” and “[r]acial division would be validated, not discouraged”).
125 See, e.g., Kenji Yoshino, The New Equal Protection, 124 HARV. L. REV. 747, 751 (2011) (discussing how group-based equality approaches may have contributed to “pluralism anxiety,” i.e., “apprehension of and about [the country’s] demographic diversity” that in turn may be responsible for a constricted development of equality law and arguing that more universal “dignity”-based arguments could lead to greater progress). But see Hutchinson, supra note 26, at 10 (critiquing Yoshino’s argument and supporting literature).
126 See, e.g., Kang, supra note 110, at 25 (defining stigma as “a mark signifying that the
there have been differing conceptualizations of the meaning of “stigma” on the Court at various times.\[^{127}\] what is most relevant for this Article is that antibalkanization proponents believe that government uses of race stigmatize everyone who is affected by them—both their “beneficiaries” and those who are “disadvantaged,”\[^{128}\] albeit in different ways. The main beneficiaries of programs in the approach’s core territory are members of racial minority groups.\[^{129}\] One might think that such beneficiaries are therefore the recipients of racial “preferences”\[^{130}\]—and thus perhaps on first sight would simply be advantaged. But antibalkanization proponents worry that such preferences might in fact be based on, and encourage others to adopt, long-standing negative social meanings that associate racial minorities with “notions of racial inferiority”\[^{131}\] and “hold[...] that certain groups are unable to achieve success without special protection.”\[^{132}\] Significantly, according to the approach, once the government uses race “too much” it is likely to encourage such stigmatization regardless of whether the government itself holds these negative views or intends to promote them.\[^{133}\]

127 Lenhardt, supra note 126, at 864–75 (discussing different conceptualizations of stigmatic harms in case law, such as citizenship harm, psychological harm, reputational harm, and notions of racial otherness).

128 See, e.g., Metro Broad., 497 U.S. at 604 (O’Connor, J., dissenting) (“Racial classifications, whether providing benefits to or burdening particular racial or ethnic groups, may stigmatize those groups singled out for different treatment.”).

129 See supra note 44 and accompanying text. My use of the term “main beneficiary” is limited. It simply refers to the Court’s view of whose interests are primarily benefitted by such programs. Many such uses of race also benefit White people and society as a whole in many important ways. See, e.g., infra notes 394–97 and accompanying text.

130 The notion that governmental uses of race that promote greater racial equality involve “racial preferences” is both popular and problematic. As Devon Carbado and Cheryl Harris have demonstrated, for example, racial preference arguments are based on questionable “baseline assumptions” about the status quo of racial inequality and overlook many “racial asymmetry[ies]” in the ways in which distributions of social benefits and burdens “are already stacked in ways that prefer whites and disadvantage blacks.” Carbado & Harris, supra note 35, at 1200; see also Simson, supra note 35, at 1100–03 (connecting preference rhetoric to psychological preferences for racial hierarchy).


132 Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke, 438 U.S. 265, 298 (1978) (opinion of Powell, J.); see also Croson, 488 U.S. at 494 (approvingly quoting same language).

133 See, e.g., Fullilove v. Klutznick, 448 U.S. 448, 545 (1980) (Stevens, J., dissenting) (“[E]ven though it is not the actual predicate for this legislation, a statute of this kind inevitably is perceived by many as resting on an assumption that those who are granted this special preference are less qualified in some respect that is identified purely by their race.”)
Importantly for the approach’s racial hostility and resentment conclusions, these stigmatization fears are compounded by concerns that those who are “disadvantaged” by governmental uses of race—i.e., Whites, in the approach’s core territory—

are also stigmatized in various ways. When the governmental use of race is justified on remedial grounds—i.e., when the government uses race to counteract the past and/or present effects of racial discrimination against racial minorities—the concern is that Whites are stigmatized by disregard of their “innocence.” That is, Whites are stamped “with the unproven charge of past racial discrimination.” In other words, the government does not merely treat all White Americans as if they are the same (stereotyping), but it treats them as if they are all perpetrators or beneficiaries of discrimination against racial minorities (stigmatization). When the governmental use of race is justified on forward-looking grounds, by contrast—for example, when the government uses race to ensure greater diversity of backgrounds, viewpoints, etc., in a given context—the concern is that Whites are stigmatized by the implication that their contributions, regardless of their individual circumstances, are considered not as valuable as those of racial minorities based on their race.

Here, again, the approach’s general concern about the possibility of racial stigmatization and its further exacerbation of negative stereotypes is consistent with concerns of progressive scholars, some of which have argued that constitutional
rational equality questions should centrally turn on the question of stigmatization.\footnote{See, e.g., Lenhardt, supra note 126, at 890–96; Kang, \textit{supra} note 110, at 24–30.} Again also, the point is limited. Many (likely most) such scholars will not agree with the way in which stigma is mobilized in specific antibalkanization opinions,\footnote{Lenhardt, \textit{supra} note 126, at 877 (“In far too many cases, the analysis employed by the Court has been ahistorical and willfully ignorant of relevant contexts, and, thus, necessarily incomplete.”); Kang, \textit{supra} note 110, at 44–46 (acknowledging that from the perspective of a White challenger of an affirmative action program, such a program may broadcast a message of “antipathy and selective indifference” but ultimately arguing that when this concern is reconciled with other perspectives “the objective social meaning of affirmative action programs in general is not strongly stigmatic”); \textit{see also generally} Simson, \textit{supra} note 136 (critiquing reliance on ideology of “white innocence” in race-conscious remedies jurisprudence).} especially as it pertains to the stigmatization of whites.\footnote{For example, the concern that governmental efforts to promote greater racial equality are, in reality, bad for their racial minority beneficiaries has a troubled history which provides many reasons to be deeply skeptical about accepting such arguments at face value. \textit{See generally} Jill Elaine Hasday, \textit{Protecting Them from Themselves: The Persistence of Mutual Benefits Arguments for Sex and Race Inequality}, 84 N.Y.U. L. REV. 1464 (2009).} But the approach’s concern about racial stigmatization itself need not be disingenuous, even if it is only somewhat informed.

4. The Ultimate Racial Equality Obstacle: White Racial Hostility and Resentment

If the government’s decision to use a racial classification or its equivalent is the hazardous starting point for a bias cascade that infuses racial stereotyping into people’s thinking, divides society, and encourages the proliferation of harmful stigmatic messages about everyone and anyone, wouldn’t it be logical for those disadvantaged by such bias to be upset and resentful? Wouldn’t this resentment, grounded as it is in negative racial meanings and divisions with a dark history, prevent even well-meaning people with a commitment to racial equality from engaging each other in a harmonious way that would spur progress toward substantive equal opportunity? And wouldn’t it make sense to lay responsibility for such counterproductive hostility and resentment at the feet of the government perpetrator? The antibalkanization approach emphatically answers yes to all of the above.

Notably, the approach does not view the possibility of racial hostility and resentment as just another problematic aspect of racial classifications. It specifically sees such hostility and resentment as the \textit{culmination} of the bias cascade laid out above and as the ultimate obstacle on the path toward substantive equal opportunity. As an illustration of this point as well as the approach’s internal logical progression and consistency over time and across Justices who have applied it, consider the
following three examples from three different Justices and in three different contexts (though all in the approach’s core territory).

Take as a first example Justice Stevens’ dissent in Fullilove, in which the Court upheld a Congressional affirmative action program in public contracting that had the remedial purpose of addressing the effects of prior race discrimination in such contracting. Justice Stevens’ starting point for his opinion, which he grounded in the dark history of government “monopoly privileges,” was suspicion toward racial classifications: “Because racial characteristics so seldom provide a relevant basis for disparate treatment, and because classifications based on race are potentially so harmful to the entire body politic, it is especially important that the reasons for any such classification be clearly identified and unquestionably legitimate.” This suspicion was based on the risk that such classifications often embody a “stereotyped reaction [that] may have no rational relationship—other than pure prejudicial discrimination—to the stated purpose for which the classification is being made.” Indeed, what he perceived as the poorly tailored, “slapdash” nature of the program suggested to Stevens that what really motivated Congress was “racial politics,” i.e., minority groups negotiating “a piece of the action” for themselves. The problem with such governmental stereotyping, in turn, was that it encouraged others to stereotype as well, leading to stigmatization: Congress “fostered” an “assumption” that “many” people might be willing to make when prodded, namely “that those who are granted this special preference are less qualified in some respect that is identified purely by their race,” thus “imply[ing] to some the recipients’ inferiority and especial need for protection.” Under such circumstances, the “preference” program would “inevitably . . . engender resentment on the part of competitors excluded” and indeed “only exacerbate

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143 See Fullilove v. Klutznick, 448 U.S. 448, 473 (1980) (setting out remedial purpose of program at issue). Justice Stevens’s dissent in Fullilove is a particularly important example because it is repeatedly cited with approval in later decisions by antibalkanization Justices as accurately setting out the constitutional problems posed by government racial classifications.

144 Id. at 532–33 (Stevens, J., dissenting).

145 Id. at 533–35.

146 Id. at 534 n.4; see also id. at 552–53 (“The risk that habitual attitudes toward classes of persons, rather than analysis of the relevant characteristics of the class, will serve as a basis for a legislative classification is present when benefits are distributed as well as when burdens are imposed.”).

147 Id. at 539.

148 Id. at 542.

149 Id. at 545.

150 Id. at 545 n.17; see also id. at 545 (Preferential treatment will cause “skepticism on the part of customers and suppliers aware of the statutory classification.”). As noted above, Justice Stevens believed that these negative meanings would follow “even though [they were] not the actual predicate for this legislation.” Id.

151 Id.; see also id. at 532–33 (“History teaches us that the costs associated with a sovereign’s grant of exclusive privileges often encompass more than the high prices and shoddy workmanship that are familiar handmaidens of monopoly; they engender animosity and discontent as well.”).
rather than reduce racial prejudice.\textsuperscript{152} Therefore, the program would "delay the time when race will become a truly irrelevant, or at least insignificant, factor,"\textsuperscript{153} could not "be defended as an appropriate method of reducing racial prejudice,"\textsuperscript{154} would "disserve the goal of equal opportunity,"\textsuperscript{155} and therefore should be held unconstitutional.

Take as another example Justice Kennedy’s dissent in \textit{Metro Broadcasting}, which upheld a federal licensing program that had the \textit{forward-looking} purpose of pursuing greater diversity in broadcasting content through various mechanisms designed to increase racial minority station ownership.\textsuperscript{156} Kennedy started his dissent by invoking \textit{Plessy v. Ferguson}\textsuperscript{157} to situate the case in the troubling history of the government’s use of racial classifications for ostensible racial equality purposes.\textsuperscript{158} Kennedy then criticized the government for its own stereotyping—for "enacting into law the stereotypical assumption that the race of owners is linked to broadcast content,"\textsuperscript{159} and basing its program "on the demeaning notion that members of the defined racial groups ascribe to certain ‘minority views’ that must be different from those of other citizens.”\textsuperscript{160} Worried that this would encourage similar stereotyping by others, shading quickly into the stigmatization of the program’s "supposed beneficiaries,” Kennedy warned that “[s]pecial preferences . . . can foster the view that members of the favored groups are inherently less able to compete on their own.”\textsuperscript{161} Turning to the stigmatization of the “disadvantaged group,” Kennedy pointed to “the danger that the ‘stereotypical thinking’ that prompts policies such as the FCC rules here ‘stigmatizes the disadvantaged class with the unproven charge of past racial discrimination.’”\textsuperscript{162} This was “not a proposition that the many citizens, who to their knowledge ‘have never discriminated against anyone on the basis of race’

\textsuperscript{152} Id. at 545; see also, e.g., Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co., 488 U.S. 469, 520 (1989) (Kennedy, J., concurring in part and concurring in the judgment) (arguing that because local ordinance implementing race-based set-asides in contracting was "not a remedy, but . . . itself a preference [it] will cause the same corrosive animosities that the Constitution forbids in the whole sphere of government, and that our national policy condemns in the rest of society as well").

\textsuperscript{153} Id. at 548; see also City of Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co., 488 U.S. 469, 517 (2000) (“The law itself may not become the instrument for generating the prejudice and hostility all too often directed against persons whose particular ancestry is disclosed by their ethnic characteristics and cultural traditions.”).

\textsuperscript{154} Fullilove, 448 U.S. at 545 (Stevens, J., dissenting).

\textsuperscript{155} Id.

\textsuperscript{156} Id.

\textsuperscript{157} See Metro Broad., Inc. v. F.C.C., 497 U.S. 547, 632 (1990) (Kennedy, J., dissenting).

\textsuperscript{158} 163 U.S. 537 (1896).

\textsuperscript{159} Id. at 631–32 (Kennedy, J., dissenting) (arguing that majority “exhumes \textit{Plessy’s} deferential approach to racial classifications”).

\textsuperscript{160} Id. at 632.

\textsuperscript{161} Id. at 636.

will find easy to accept.”163 What would all of this lead to consequently? “[I]ntolerance and antagonism against the entire membership of the favored classes,”164 “animosity and discontent,”165 and “the seeds of race hate . . . planted under the sanction of law.”166 Kennedy closed with a warning that allowing such bias cascades to fester would have the ultimate negative consequence of hindering the achievement of racial equality by subverting racial harmony—and thus was unconstitutional:

Though the racial composition of this Nation is far more diverse than the first Justice Harlan foresaw, his warning in dissent is now all the more apposite: “The destinies of the two races, in this country, are indissolubly linked together, and the interests of both require that the common government of all shall not permit the seeds of race hate to be planted under the sanction of law.” . . . Perhaps the tolerance and decency to which our people aspire will let the disfavored rise above hostility and the favored escape condescension. But history suggests much peril in this enterprise, and so the Constitution forbids us to undertake it.167

Take as a final example Justice O’Connor’s opinion for the Court in the voting rights/redistricting context in Shaw v. Reno. Proceeding from the basic starting point that “[r]acial classifications of any sort pose the risk of lasting harm to our society” because “[t]hey reinforce the belief, held by too many for too much of our history, that individuals should be judged by the color of their skin,”168 O’Connor worried that racial gerrymanders—in crude fashion—lumped together “individuals who belong to the same race, but who are otherwise widely separated by geographical and political boundaries, and who may have little in common with one another but the color of their skin.”169 Whatever the government’s motivations for doing so, this would “reinforce[] the perception that members of the same racial group—regardless of their age, education, economic status, or the community in which they live—think alike, share the same political interests, and will prefer the same candidates at the polls . . . [i.e.,] impermissible racial stereotypes.”170 Such stereotyping risked

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163 Id. at 637 (quoting Croson, 488 U.S. at 516 (opinion of Stevens, J.))
164 Id. at 636 (quoting Fullilove v. Klutznick, 448 U.S. 448, 547 (1980) (Stevens, J., dissenting)).
165 Id. at 637.
166 Id. (quoting Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537, 560 (1896) (Harlan, J., dissenting)).
167 Id. (emphasis added) (internal citation omitted). Another clear example of Justice Kennedy applying the approach is his plurality opinion in Schuette, written 24 years after his dissent in Metro Broad.
169 Id. at 647.
170 Id.
creating racial divisions, emphasizing that loyalty is properly race-based, leading in turn to “antagonisms . . . at war with the democratic ideal.” In other words:

[r]acial classifications with respect to voting carry particular dangers. Racial gerrymandering, even for remedial purposes, may balkanize us into competing racial factions; it threatens to carry us further from the goal of a political system in which race no longer matters—a goal that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments embody, and to which the Nation continues to aspire. It is for these reasons that race-based districting by our state legislatures demands close judicial scrutiny.

One could continue throughout the opinions cited for the constituent parts of the antibalkanization logic outlined above. While not all cases always employ all of the reasoning steps explicitly and in order, once one understands the underlying antibalkanization approach and logic as laid out above, one can see its through-line across four decades, multiple different Justices, and across contexts.

D. Racial Hostility Perpetrator or Equality Contributor: Antibalkanization’s Strict Scrutiny

Lest the above suggests that antibalkanization proponents are no different from colorblind anticlassificationists who simply mobilize plausible concerns about government uses of race to oppose all racial classifications, it is important to remember that antibalkanization proponents are clear that they do not reject all uses of race.

171 Id. at 648 (by perpetuating stereotypes, “a racial gerrymander may exacerbate . . . racial bloc voting” and will serve “as a divisive force in a community”); see also id. at 650 (Racial gerrymandering “reinforces racial stereotypes and threatens to undermine our system of representative democracy by signaling to elected officials that they represent a particular racial group rather than their constituency as a whole.”).

172 Id. at 648–49; see also Schuette v. Coal. to Def. Affirmative Action, 572 U.S. 291, 309 (2014) (suggesting that when racial division is “validated, not discouraged,” “racial antagonisms and conflict tend to arise”).

173 Shaw, 509 U.S. at 657 (emphasis added).

174 Justice Stevens made clear as early as Fullilove that “I am not convinced that the [Equal Protection] Clause contains an absolute prohibition against any statutory classification based on race.” 448 U.S. 448, 548 (1980). Justice Powell took a similar position. See id. at 496 n.1 (“Although racial classifications require strict judicial scrutiny, I do not agree that the Constitution prohibits all racial classification.”). Similarly, Justice O’Connor called the petitioners in Shaw “wise” for making the concession “that race-conscious redistricting is not always unconstitutional.” 509 U.S. at 642. Justice Kennedy has said that while the colorblindness “axiom” of Justice Harlan’s dissent in Plessy should “command our assent” “as an aspiration,” “[i]n the real world, it is regrettable to say, it cannot be a universal constitutional
It is also important to remember that the approach does not worry about racial hostility and resentment for their own sake, for example because it simply would prefer a society without such hostility and resentment. Rather, it views them as decisive obstacles on the path to the racial equality end-goal of substantive equal opportunity within its vision of American democracy. That such hostility and resentment are rooted in a bias cascade triggered by the government’s initial decision to rely on race “too much” is key. In the approach’s view, it is this decision that threatens to turn well-meaning Whites into racially divided backlashers and antagonists who are no longer willing to engage in dialogue and action in the service of racial equality when they otherwise would be. This, in turn, obstructs progress toward substantive equal opportunity.

The conclusion that the anticlassification approach draws from this is that this danger is so great and problematic that one should stay away from it entirely and prohibit racial classifications (and perhaps any consideration of race) categorically.\(^{175}\) The antibalkanization approach rejects this categorical conclusion and instead grounds its constitutional judgments in a “racial hostility perpetrator” analysis. Within this analysis, the above logic supports a strong presumption that the government acts unconstitutionally whenever it uses race “too much” because of the likelihood that doing so triggers the bias cascade and leads to the ultimate racial equality obstacle of White racial resentment and hostility. But antibalkanization proponents also recognize that the government should not be entirely “disqualified from acting in response to” “[t]he unhappy persistence of both the practice and the lingering effects of racial discrimination against minority groups. . . .”\(^{176}\) Accordingly, the key constitutional question is not whether the government relied on race as such, but whether it used race without becoming a racial hostility perpetrator. Because the approach believes that White racial hostility and resentment is the end-result of multiple steps in a bias cascade, it recognizes that it is possible (though difficult) for the government to structure a race-conscious program in a way that prevents this cascade from unfolding in full.\(^{177}\) If the government does so, but only then, the approach will consider the race-conscious action conducive to the achievement of substantive equal opportunity and permit it.

Antibalkanization proponents have chosen strict scrutiny as the vehicle for channeling government actors toward appropriately structured uses of race and away from inappropriate ones. The bias cascade influences the approach’s application of strict principle.” Parents Involved in Cnty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 551 U.S. 701, 788 (2007) (Kennedy, J., concurring).

\(^{175}\) See, e.g., Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña, 515 U.S. 200, 240 (1995) (Thomas, J., concurring in part) (“As far as the Constitution is concerned, it is irrelevant whether a government’s racial classifications are drawn by those who wish to oppress a race or by those who have a sincere desire to help those thought to be disadvantaged.”).

\(^{176}\) Id. at 237; see also supra Section I.A.

\(^{177}\) See also supra notes 65–66 and accompanying text.
scrutiny consistently from beginning—what triggers strict scrutiny—to middle—
what government purposes are permissible—to end—what counts as sufficient
tailoring of governmental means to its purposes.

With respect to triggers, what matters for antibalkanization proponents is the
nature of the process through which the government pursues racial equality, as well
as the impact this process has on how Whites and racial minority group members
relate to each other. The approach pursues something akin to a “reverse” rep-
resentation-reinforcement approach. Rather than policing the political process to
prevent systematic disadvantaging of vulnerable minorities, the approach polices the
political process so that it reinforces what the approach perceives as the basic good
intentions of most participants (especially Whites) in American democracy and
prevents retriggering the racial antagonism, hostility, and resentment that is the real
obstacle on the path toward substantive equal opportunity. A logical starting point
is an inquiry into whether the government has relied “too much” on race. When a
governmental action “cannot be understood as anything other than” based on race,
it is highly likely that it will be perceived by Whites as based on governmental
stereotyping and racial politics in favor of racial minorities. This, in turn, is likely
to trigger the remainder of the bias cascade and a social environment that is likely
to turn from well-meaning to antagonistic and resentful. When race is used in such
a way, the government is a presumptive racial hostility perpetrator and the approach
turns to strict scrutiny to determine whether the government can overcome the
presumption by showing that it sufficiently mitigated the bias cascade through the
specifics of its program.

By contrast, the approach assumes that Whites will not perceive programs in
which the government’s reliance on race is more diffuse as based on crude stereo-
typing and racial politics and thus the bias cascade is less likely to unfold. In such

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178 See Siegel, supra note 14, at 1301 (“[T]he antibalkanization perspective thinks about
equal protection purposively and structurally: it assesses the constitutionality of government
action by asking about the kind of polity it creates.”).

179 Representation-reinforcement theory is credited to John Hart Ely and argues that
“exacting judicial review is an instrument of process perfection, invalidating laws when the
people’s representatives ‘chok[e] off the channels of political change’ to benefit entrenched
majorities or ‘systematically disadvantag[e] some minority out of simple hostility or a prejudiced
refusal to recognize commonalities of interest.’” Rich, supra note 93, at 1532 n.30 (quoting
JOHN HART ELY, DEMOCRACY AND DISTRUST: A THEORY OF JUDICIAL REVIEW 103 (1980)).


181 See supra Section I.C.

Protection and Disparate Impact after Ricci and Inclusive Communities, in TITLE VII OF THE
CIVIL RIGHTS ACT AFTER 50 YEARS: PROCEEDINGS OF THE NEW YORK UNIVERSITY 67TH
ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON LABOR 295, 313 (2015) (“[I]f the race-conscious aspect [of a
government intervention] is visible and given a divisive social meaning, the [program] causes
a further harm at the societal level. The problem then is not just the particular individual’s
cases, the government is unlikely to be a racial hostility perpetrator and thus should receive more leeway in addressing continued racial inequality. This is perhaps the best explanation for Justice Kennedy’s distinction in *Parents Involved* between presumptively permissible race-conscious “general policies” that would be “unlikely” to be subject to strict scrutiny—such as “strategic site selection of new schools; drawing attendance zones with general recognition of the demographics of neighborhoods; allocating resources for special programs; recruiting students and faculty in a targeted fashion; and tracking enrollments, performance, and other statistics by race”—and his subjection to strict scrutiny of plans based on explicit classifications telling “each student he or she is to be defined by race.” The former type of policy, because it was structured less decisively and exclusively around the perceived interests of racial minority group members, presented concerns about the bias cascade to a “lesser degree.”

Similar concerns also influence how the approach structures the actual application of strict scrutiny. For example, proponents are more likely to view a government interest as “compelling” if they perceive its pursuit as less likely to involve broad stereotyping or racial politics by the government, or if its pursuit is likely to interrupt the cascade before it reaches racial hostility or resentment. They view an interest as less/not compelling if it does the opposite. This is illustrated by the willingness to accept as compelling a university’s interest in achieving the educational benefits of a diverse student body. Justice O’Connor affirmed the permissibility of using race as an explicit factor in university admissions in *Grutter* because she thought that the pursuit of a diverse student body did not require the government to rely on racial stereotyping, and that therefore such uses of race would not encourage loss of [an opportunity] but the exacerbation of race as a source of tension and ill-feeling in the polity at large.”)

Parents Involved in Cmty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 551 U.S. 701, 788–89 (2007) (Kennedy, J., concurring). Kennedy noted that school districts should be permitted to employ such policies “with candor,” which would make sense if they were unlikely to trigger the bias cascade and most well-meaning White people could be expected to accept them. *Id.* at 789.  

Id. at 797. As Stephen Rich has noted, Kennedy’s use of terms such as “unlikely” and “lesser degree” suggests that if the types of policies Kennedy cited approvingly were designed in a way that their racially neutral aspects were too close of a proxy for race, i.e., if race was used “too much” after all, a future Court may well apply strict scrutiny. *Id.* at 1583–85. This would be consistent with the antibalkanization logic.

Siegel, *supra* note 26, at 43 (noting “new form of strict scrutiny” devised by antibalkanization proponents).

See Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña, 515 U.S. 200, 227 (Strict scrutiny can only be met by “narrowly tailored measures that further compelling governmental interests.”).

Grutter v. Bollinger, 539 U.S. 306, 333 (“The Law School does not premise its need for critical mass on ‘any belief that minority students always (or even consistently) express some characteristic minority viewpoint on any issue. . . .’ To the contrary, diminishing the force of such stereotypes is both a crucial part of the Law School’s mission, and one that it
stereotyping by others, and perhaps even reduce stereotyping if properly implemented. Similarly, pursuing this interest does not require judgments about White innocence, and thus also involves less risk of stigmatizing Whites. Furthermore, because the pursuit of diversity is an interest in which Whites can also see themselves represented well-meaning Whites could be expected to accept an appropriately structured program as “taken in the service of the goal of equality itself,” rather than as racial politics.

The victims of this way of thinking about compelling interests, however, have been programs that pursue a remedial interest. Even though remediating the effects of systemic racial discrimination throughout society, in the past and present, has long been what many people see as a “principal justification for racial affirmative action,” antibalkanization proponents have strictly limited the boundaries of what counts as a compelling remedial interest. Specifically, they have rejected the interest in remediating “societal discrimination” and instead demand “identified” discrimination by the government actor at issue. This is largely because proponents believe that approving a broader interest in remediating societal discrimination would be too likely to permit the government to engage in wholesale stereotyping and racial politics. As a result, pursuit of such an interest would be likely to encourage others (which the Law School’s admissions policy promotes ‘cross-racial understanding,’ helps to break down racial stereotypes, and ‘enables [students] to better understand persons of different races.’); see also Fisher II, 136 S. Ct. 2198, 2210 (2016) (approvingly quoting this language).

189 Id. at 330 (“[T]he Law School’s admissions policy promotes ‘cross-racial understanding,’” helps to break down racial stereotypes, and ‘enables [students] to better understand persons of different races.’”); see also Fisher II, 136 S. Ct. 2198, 2210 (2016) (approvingly quoting this language).


191 See Grutter, 539 U.S. at 338 (“The Law School frequently accepts nonminority applicants with grades and test scores lower than underrepresented minority applicants,” demonstrating that it “seriously weighs many other diversity factors besides race that can make a real and dispositive difference for nonminority applicants as well.”).

192 Id. at 342 (citing Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co., 488 U.S. 469, 510 (1989)).


194 See, e.g., Bush v. Vera, 517 U.S. 952, 982 (1996) (“A State’s interest in remedying discrimination is compelling when two conditions are satisfied. First, the discrimination that the State seeks to remedy must be specific, identified discrimination; second, the State must have had a strong basis in evidence to conclude that remedial action was necessary.”) (internal quotation marks omitted); Croson, 488 U.S. at 511 n.1 (opinion of Stevens, J.) (“Unless the legislature can identify both the particular victims and the particular perpetrators of past discrimination . . . a remedial justification for race-based legislation will almost certainly sweep too broadly.”).

195 See, e.g., Croson, 488 U.S. at 510 (Absent findings of discrimination, “there is a danger
to stereotype in similar fashion, leading to the stigmatization of racial minorities as inferior and of whites as wholesale perpetrators of racial discrimination, or, at least, undeserving beneficiaries of racial privilege.\textsuperscript{196} This is not something that the many white Americans who don’t see themselves this way “will find easy to accept,”\textsuperscript{197} leading to “animosity and discontent” and the perpetuation of prejudice, perhaps even “the seeds of race hate,” all of which obstruct racial equality progress.\textsuperscript{198} In other words, pursuit of such an interest turns the government into a counterproductive racial hostility perpetrator. By contrast, the approach assumes that well-meaning Whites would be less likely to react in the same ways to programs based on identified findings of prior discrimination because such programs would be perceived to be based not on stereotypes but actual status as victim or perpetrator / beneficiary of discrimination and thus be “taken in the service of the goal of equality itself.”\textsuperscript{199}

The narrow tailoring requirement ensures that the government does not subvert the promise of a compelling interest by triggering the bias cascade via unsophisticated implementation. In doing so, the approach gives more deference if the government pursues a compelling interest with a lower risk of triggering the bias cascade, and vice versa. Thus, in their decisions upholding universities’ pursuit of student body diversity in \textit{Grutter} and \textit{Fisher}, Justices O’Connor and Kennedy noted that narrow tailoring “does not require exhaustion of every conceivable race-neutral alternative\textsuperscript{200} but only of those that are “workable.”\textsuperscript{201} They also showed deference in evaluating the universities’ implementation efforts, which was promptly criticized

\textsuperscript{196} See, e.g., \textit{Croson}, 488 U.S. at 515–17 (Stevens, J., concurring in part) (arguing that apparent stereotyping underlying remedial ordinance suggested the possibility that the ordinance was “nothing more than a form of patronage . . . racial patronage”); Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke, 438 U.S. 265, 310 (plurality opinion) (approving remediation of societal discrimination as compelling “would be to convert a remedy heretofore reserved for violations of legal rights into a privilege that all institutions throughout the Nation could grant at their pleasure to whatever groups are perceived as victims of societal discrimination.”).

\textsuperscript{197} See supra note 165 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{198} See supra Section I.C.4.

\textsuperscript{199} Croson, 488 U.S. at 510; cf. Wygant v. Jackson Bd. of Educ., 476 U.S. 267, 280–81 (1986) (“As part of this Nation’s dedication to eradicating racial discrimination, innocent persons may be called upon to bear some of the burden of the remedy. ‘When effectuating a limited and properly tailored remedy to cure the effects of prior discrimination, such a “sharing of the burden” by innocent parties is not impermissible.’”) (quoting \textit{Fullilove} v. Klutznick, 448 U.S. 448, 484 (1980)).


\textsuperscript{201} \textit{Fisher II}, 136 S. Ct. 2198, 2208 (2016).
by the more conservative Justices as an “abandoning” of strict scrutiny. Within the approach, however, such deference makes sense. Since pursuing the diversity interest generally tends to counteract the bias cascade and the government is less likely to be a racial hostility perpetrator, it is appropriate to grant the government deference unless it can be shown that the government did, in fact, fail to mitigate the bias cascade through excessive or sloppy uses of race in a particular situation.

Justice O’Connor’s decision to switch sides and strike down a race-conscious admissions system in *Gratz*, the companion case to *Grutter*, is best explained by her view that she saw the admissions program at issue—which gave an automatic, and comparatively large, number of points to underrepresented minority applicants in a process in which a certain number of points guaranteed admission—as an example of the latter. Some scholars have suggested that the deciding factor for O’Connor may have been that the greater “opaqueness” of the program in *Grutter* would lead to less balkanization. The antibalkanization logic set out above suggests instead that what was critical for Justice O’Connor was that the use of race in *Gratz* was “mechanical,” i.e., that it assigned the same amount of points to each minority applicant in a way that was “automatic” and “predetermined.” The combination of a large and automatic point award would communicate to (even a well-meaning) white observer that the program was based on stereotyping, designed to ensure racial minority applicants a “piece of the action,” and thus would kick off the bias cascade. Having their college experience framed by such an admissions system, students would be likely to relate to each other in ways that perpetuated racial divisions and a sense of antagonistic group competition, thus undermining rather than facilitating the racial harmony necessary for progress toward racial equality. A holistic and more flexible system as in *Grutter*, by contrast, would communicate that race was taken

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202 Notably, in *Grutter*, this charge was made by Justice Kennedy himself. 539 U.S. at 387 (Kennedy, J., dissenting). As I suggest below, this could be partially explained by Justice Kennedy’s willingness to soften his stance on race-conscious equality efforts at least somewhat over time. See infra Section I.F. In *Fisher II*, the charge was made by Justice Alito. 136 S. Ct. at 2215 (Alito, J., dissenting).

203 This was, in effect, Justice Kennedy’s charge in *Grutter*. Rather than objecting to the use of race as such, Kennedy thought the record established that the university had “mask[ed] its attempt to make race an automatic factor in most instances.” 539 U.S. at 389 (Kennedy, J., dissenting). Because this reflected the opposite of individualized review, i.e., governmental stereotyping and racial politics, “[t]he unhappy consequence [would] be to perpetuate the hostilities that proper consideration of race is designed to avoid.” Id. at 394.


205 *Id.* at 279–80.

206 See, e.g., Ian Ayres & Sydney Foster, *Don’t Tell, Don’t Ask: Narrow Tailoring after Grutter and Gratz*, 85 Tex. L. Rev. 517, 569–70 (2007) (stating and criticizing this possibility); Siegel, *supra* note 90, at 798–800 (describing argument as made by various scholars).

207 *Gratz*, 539 U.S. at 280.

208 It would not much matter under the antibalkanization approach whether this was the “actual predicate” of the program. See *supra* note 133.
into account the same way that other characteristics were considered, i.e., when, and
to the extent that, it contributed to a productive learning environment. Because such
a process would create a productive forum for harmonious interaction between well-
meaning participants, it would be “taken in the service of the goal of equality itself”209
and whites “would have no basis to complain of unequal treatment under the
Fourteenth Amendment.”210 Thus, it would make sense to provide some deference
to a university if it used a holistic program, but not if it used a “mechanical” one.

Similar considerations can explain why antibalkanization proponents have been
less deferential when race is used for remedial purposes.211 Indeed, the Court has not
upheld a remedial program since 1987.212 Superficially, this is curious because even
conservative Justices agree that remedying past discrimination and its effects is a
compelling (to them, perhaps the only compelling) government interest.213 Moreover,
this interest is most closely related to the troubling history of race that underwrites the
antibalkanization approach’s willingness to allow the government to consider race in
the first place.214 From the standpoint of managing the bias cascade and racial hostility
perpetrators, however, this lack of deference makes more sense. Remediating discrim-
ination, especially when discrimination itself is understood from a perpetrator perspec-
tive that many Whites hold,215 requires judgments about discriminator/beneficiary
and victim status that Whites are likely to perceive as based on broad stereotypes and
stigmatic “unproven charges”216 absent specific evidence to the contrary. When the

210 Id. at 341.
211 Justice Stevens has been most explicit about this lack of deference, noting that “a
remedial justification for race-based legislation will almost certainly sweep too broadly.”
Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co., 488 U.S. 469, 511 n.1 (1989) (Stevens, J., concurring); see also
Hutchinson, supra note 26, at 49 (“[T]he Court has made remedying racial discrimination
the most difficult basis for using affirmative action.”).
212 See United States v. Paradise, 480 U.S. 149 (1987) (upholding judicially imposed race-
based promotional quota in response to egregious discriminatory conduct by the Alabama
Department of Public Safety). Even in Paradise, Justice Powell concurred separately that his
vote was based on the limited nature of the race-conscious decree and its “relatively diffuse
impact on “innocent white troopers.” Id. at 188–89. Justice O’Connor dissented based on her
view that the decree was based on inappropriate stereotyping and the district court’s refusal
to consider race-neutral alternatives. See id. at 197, 201.
(2014) (plurality opinion) (past decisions recognize “the compelling interest of remedying
the effects of past intentional discrimination.”); Shaw v. Hunt, 517 U.S. 899, 909 (1996) (“A
State’s interest in remedying the effects of past or present racial discrimination may in the
proper case justify a government’s use of racial distinctions.”).
214 See supra Section I.C.1.
215 See, e.g., Russell K. Robinson, Perceptual Segregation, 108 Colum. L. Rev. 1093,
1126–31 (2008) (discussing disagreement between Whites and people of color about the
definition of discrimination and noting that Whites are likely to view racial discrimination as
“evident primarily when there is overt evidence of racial hostility”).
216 See supra note 136 and accompanying text.
government thus creates a process in which Whites and racial minorities interact around a remedial aim, the approach’s logic suggests that the government is highly likely to create a bias cascade that dead-ends in counterproductive racial conflict and antagonism rather than racial harmony. This will occur unless the program at issue is very carefully tailored to make clear that the government is, in fact, responding only to clear instances of prior wrongdoing rather than using race as a rough proxy and vehicle for racial politics.217

Judgments about the government as a racial hostility perpetrator, in other words, pervade the antibalkanization approach’s use of strict scrutiny and its judgments about the constitutionality of government race-consciousness under the Equal Protection Clause.

E. Antibalkanization Approach Rex

When the above analysis is taken as a whole, one sees the result of a 40-year jurisprudential effort to make concerns about racial balkanization central to constitutional racial equality jurisprudence. This effort has largely succeeded, driving not only the choice of doctrinal tests but also the specifics of their implementation. The opinions cited above as support for the different steps of the antibalkanization approach have either become governing doctrine over time, remain good law today, or represent the leading opinions in areas where the Court is splintered. In the context of affirmative action in higher education, for example, Justice Powell’s opinion in Bakke which used antibalkanization concerns to justify the application of strict scrutiny, the determination of which government interests were compelling, and how a permissible program should be implemented, was reaffirmed first by the majority opinion of Justice O’Connor in Grutter and most recently by Justice Kennedy in Fisher.218 In the context of affirmative action in government contracting at the state level, Justice O’Connor’s opinion in Croson remains good law today. At the federal level, Justice Stevens’s dissent in Fullilove animated further dissents by Justices O’Connor and Kennedy in Metro Broadcasting that eventually found majority

217 This explains why antibalkanization proponents often focus on whether remedial programs provide waivers. Compare, e.g., Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co., 488 U.S. 469, 508 (1989) (rejecting remedial program in part because waivers would have provided a less rigidly race-conscious alternative), with Fullilove v. Klutznick, 448 U.S. 448, 514 (1980) (opinion of Powell, J.) (approving remedial program in part because the existing waiver provision prevented the program from being applied too “rigidly”).

expression in *Adarand*, which essentially overruled both *Fullilove* and *Metro Broadcasting* and remains good law today.\(^{219}\) In the voting rights/redistricting context, Justice O’Connor’s opinion in *Shaw* that relied on antibalkanization concerns in its decision to permit White voters to bring a new type of constitutional claim challenging racial gerrymandering was further developed in cases like *Miller* and *Shaw v. Hunt* and remains good law today.\(^ {220}\) In the context of public school desegregation, Justice Kennedy’s separate concurrence in *Parents Involved* is currently the leading opinion on the issue,\(^ {221}\) as is Justice Kennedy’s plurality opinion in *Schuette* in the context of the “political process” doctrine.

**F. Justices Willing to Learn (to Some Extent)**

While the above analysis shows the consistency and influence of the antibalkanization approach, it does not quite yet show the aspect of the approach that justifies a tepid judgment that it has some progressive potential: the approach appears to appeal specifically to Justices with a certain willingness to take the reality of continued racial inequality seriously beyond *a priori* ideological commitments, and to learn about its complexities over time. To be sure, these Justices remain committed to the basic antibalkanization logic throughout their career, and as I describe below, this fact defines the regressive reality of the approach. At the same time, it is important to uncover how antibalkanization proponents soften their application of that logic over time. They start out with significantly more race conservative views—i.e., they are significantly more hostile to race-conscious government efforts to address racial inequality—and become more supportive of such efforts over time. This softening seems to reflect not growing doubts about antibalkanization as the correct jurisprudential approach, but rather a growing sophistication and willingness to learn about the intricacies of different steps of the bias cascade. It also represents the reason why governmental race-consciousness in pursuit of racial equality remains permissible in certain circumstances even though it has been assailed for decades by a powerful camp of anticlassification proponents.

Perhaps the clearest example of this softening is Justice Stevens, who joined the Court in 1975 and whose 1980 dissent in *Fullilove* became the go-to citation for later Justices who (at earlier stages of their own career) relied on the antibalkanization approach to demand significant limits on race-conscious government decision-making.\(^ {222}\) Indeed, in her 1995 majority opinion in *Adarand*, Justice O’Connor...

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\(^{220}\) See, e.g., *Bethune-Hill v. Va. State Bd. of Elections*, 137 S. Ct. 788, 802 (2017) (“The Court’s holding in this case is controlled by precedent. The Court reaffirms the basic racial predominance analysis explained in *Miller* and *Shaw II*.”).

\(^{221}\) Brennan-Marquez, *supra* note 45, at 778 (noting that Kennedy’s opinion “effectively states the law”).

\(^{222}\) See *supra* Section I.C.4. Thus, Stevens’s *Fullilove* opinion is frequently cited above.
liberally cited Stevens’ *Fullilove* dissent[^223] to ward off a strongly worded dissent by Stevens himself, who charged that the majority’s decision to apply strict scrutiny to a Congressional affirmative action program in contracting (a position that one could read into Stevens’ *Fullilove* opinion) was the equivalent of “disregard[ing] the difference between a ‘No Trespassing’ sign and a welcome mat.”[^224] Notably, Stevens’s switch was not based on a retraction of his *Fullilove* opinion or the general antibalkanization approach it contained.[^225] Rather, it was based on a more sophisticated understanding that race is not always irrelevant and thus reliance on race need not involve stereotyping by the government;[^226] that arguments about the potential stigma imposed by affirmative action programs on minority beneficiaries, while a real concern, had to be made in context and preferably by the allegedly stigmatized themselves rather than by Whites;[^227] and that in most affirmative action programs, there is only an “indirect burden on the majority.”[^228] More generally, toward the end of his career Justice Stevens had become a consistent vote on the Court supporting race-conscious racial equality interventions of various kinds in a way that someone reading his opinions in the 1970s and early 1980s would not have been able to predict.[^229]

A similar, though more muted, point can be made about Justice O’Connor regarding her switch in votes between *Metro Broadcasting* and *Grutter*. In *Metro*, O’Connor wrote a scathing dissent that was deeply steeped in a non-contextual application of the antibalkanization logic that on first glance could have been taken to embody an anticlassification sentiment.[^230] Notably, she rejected as “clearly not a compelling interest” (indeed not even an important one) the government’s asserted interest in increasing the diversity of broadcasting viewpoints because the pursuit of such an interest could only lead to “generalizations impermissibly equating race with thoughts and behavior.”[^231] She did so even though the majority opinion discussed empirical evidence suggesting that the program was not based on stereotyping and indeed was likely to counteract stereotyping of racial minorities and to

[^224]: *Id.* at 245 (Stevens, J., dissenting).
[^225]: *See id.* at 258 (“I continue to believe that the *Fullilove* case was incorrectly decided.”).
[^226]: *See, e.g., id.* at 261 (noting that the program was “designed to overcome the social and economic disadvantages that are often associated with racial characteristics”); *id.* at 248 n.5 (“In enacting affirmative-action programs, a legislature intends to remove obstacles that have unfairly placed individuals of equal qualifications at a competitive disadvantage.”).
[^227]: *Id.* at 247 n.5 (arguing that “white-owned business” had no “standing to advance” a stigma argument on behalf of minority beneficiaries and noting that “[n]o beneficiaries of the specific program under attack today have challenged its constitutionality—perhaps because they do not find the preferences stigmatizing”).
[^228]: *Id.* at 253 n.7.
[^229]: *See also* Haney López, *supra* note 30, at 1874–77 (lauding Stevens’s “exceptional willingness to learn about racism . . . ”).
[^230]: However, the steps of the antibalkanization approach are clearly visible when laid out as above.
provide wider access to important leadership positions. These are, of course, the very arguments that O’Connor mobilized later on in her majority opinion in Grutter to support the proposition that diversity was a compelling governmental interest in university admissions. This proposition was by no means set in stone when Grutter was decided and would have been rejected had O’Connor voted in line with her intimations in Metro. While there are certainly many possible explanations for O’Connor’s change in views, one plausible explanation is that it was based at least in part on O’Connor’s willingness to learn and take seriously the large number of sophisticated amicus briefs in Grutter. These briefs showed how pursuing racial diversity via racial classifications was not necessarily an exercise in stereotyping or racial politics; would not necessarily lead to the encouragement of stereotyping, stigmatization, and racial hostility and resentment; and instead reflected the careful pursuit of important and real goals in a diverse society that remains deeply shaped by race. This switch was available to O’Connor from within the antibalkanization approach and seemed to reflect her sentiment that based on the university’s careful efforts to bring students together across racial lines rather than to divide them, the government had overcome its presumptive racial hostility perpetrator status.

Justice Kennedy’s switch to upholding a university affirmative action program in Fisher was perhaps even more surprising. He had dissented in both prior diversity-related cases, Metro and Grutter. There was also a clear opportunity to reject the particular program in Fisher, had Kennedy been so inclined, on the basis that the “Top Ten Percent Plan” that governed most admissions decisions at the university produced sufficient racial diversity. But Kennedy voted to uphold the program. To be sure, he warned that racial classifications could not be used in a

232 Id. at 581–82 (majority opinion).
234 Id. at 2211–12 (majority opinion) (noting but rejecting this argument).
235 See Grutter, 539 U.S. at 330–33 (discussing amicus briefs). Justice O’Connor’s move over time toward a more complex understanding of the operation of race in American society is arguably also reflected by her decision to switch from the bloc of Justices that had consistently rejected race-conscious redistricting efforts after O’Connor’s own opinion in Shaw v. Reno, 509 U.S. 630 (1993) to join the majority opinion by Justice Breyer in Easley v. Cromartie, 532 U.S. 234 (2001). Easley overturned a “predominant factor” finding by the lower court as clearly erroneous based on an arguably more nuanced understanding of the relationships between race, party identification, and politics than the prior post-Shaw cases had displayed; see also Haney López, supra note 30, at 1862 n.371 (noting O’Connor’s shift in Easley).
236 Indeed, the dissent in Fisher seemed to go out of its way to cite Kennedy’s own opinions in prior cases dealing with governmental race-consciousness. See, e.g., Fisher II, 136 S. Ct. 2198, 2220–22 (2016) (Alito, J., dissenting).
237 See id. at 2211–12 (majority opinion) (noting but rejecting this argument).
238 Id. at 2214–15.
“divisive manner” and otherwise cabined the reach of the case. But he seemed more willing than in prior cases to accept that the university, after a careful review which had identified clear problems of racial isolation and feelings of loneliness among minority students, had used racial classifications in a way that was not based on mere stereotypes and instead would help to counter them and provide the kind of forum in which well-meaning people would interact harmoniously and in ways that would further the goal of substantive equal opportunity.

There are a few important takeaways from these examples. First, the examples illustrate how the antibalkanization approach is not reducible to either anticlassification or antisubordination and that it is analytically useful to parse out its logic in terms of the bias cascade. More importantly, these examples illustrate that the approach speaks to Justices who are not disingenuous about their stated intentions to take the continued reality of racial inequality seriously and who are willing to learn about it to some extent. This internal growth dimension has preserved some space for race-conscious racial equality efforts that would otherwise no longer be available. Anti-balkanization proponents voted for such efforts in situations where they were not constrained to do so by their prior jurisprudence and could expect to be heavily criticized (often in their own words) by their colleagues. There is progressive potential in a jurisprudence that allows its proponents to prioritize intellectual engagement over ideology in those ways. In this way, at least, antibalkanization proponents have prevented constitutional law from becoming a simple vehicle for “intentional blindness” toward racial inequality.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize the limits of these points. For one, the space carved out for race-conscious equality programs by the above examples is slim and perpetually precarious. Even in higher education, where antibalkanization

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239 See id. at 2209 (noting the “artificial basis” upon which the case was litigated because the plaintiff did not challenge the Top Ten Percent plan and that this “may limit [the decision’s] value for prospective guidance”).

240 Id. at 2211 (noting a “thoughtful review” by the university before implementing the race-conscious program).

241 Id. at 2212.

242 Id. at 2211 (accepting as “concrete and precise” the university’s goals of pursuing “the destruction of stereotypes, the promotion of cross-racial understanding, the preparation of a student body for an increasingly diverse workforce and society, and the cultivat[ion of] a set of leaders with legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry”). Similar to Justice O’Connor, Justice Kennedy also seemed to soften somewhat in his redistricting jurisprudence later in his career. For example, he joined Justice Breyer’s opinion for a slim five-Justice majority in Ala. Legis. Black Caucus v. Alabama, 575 U.S. 254 (2015), which allowed some discretion in race-conscious redistricting for legislatures as part of narrow tailoring; and he wrote the majority opinion himself in Bethune-Hill v. Va. State Bd. of Elections, 137 S. Ct. 788 (2017), which applied this discretion to uphold a race-conscious district.

243 See generally Haney López, supra note 30.

244 The next challenge to affirmative action in higher education is already before the court.
decisions have most clearly preserved the possibility for affirmative action, Justice Kennedy’s decision in Schuette mobilized the antibalkanization logic to uphold an anti-affirmative action referendum because he believed that the democratic process that produced it represented the kind of well-meaning debate and decision-making in pursuit of racial equality (just in the form of a prohibition on affirmative action) that the approach wants to call forth. This conclusion was not only problematic on the facts of that case, but it also facilitates future challenges to affirmative action programs at universities.

Furthermore, while the examples illustrate a willingness to grow within the antibalkanization approach, they do not show a willingness to question its fundamental baseline assumptions and its perpetrator perspective. Justice Stevens’ progression over time shows how much change true willingness to learn about the complexities of race can generate, but it also shows the limits of containing such willingness within a perpetrator perspective. Stevens never repudiated his dissent in Fullilove, thus making it easier for its strong language to be mobilized restrictively later by those with a similarly limited vision of racial inequality as his own at the time. More importantly, even later in his career, Stevens did not relinquish the approach’s basic “skepticism” toward racial classifications and reiterated his conviction that remedial reliance on race was especially likely to be inappropriate.

In this regard, it is important to remember that while by the mid-1980s Justice Stevens had made clear his willingness to accept forward-looking uses of race, he

See supra note 57. More broadly, the softening of views described here appears to have become less substantial with Justices appointed later in time. As Russell Robinson has shown, for example, Justice Kennedy’s overall constitutional jurisprudence in race cases is predominantly race-conservative. Russell K. Robinson, Unequal Protection, 68 STAN. L. REV. 151, 198–204 (2016) (Empirical study of Kennedy’s votes in constitutional cases dealing with claims based on race, sex, and sexual orientation between 1988 and 2015 shows that in nonunanimous cases Kennedy’s votes can be described as “liberal” in only one-third of the cases).

Schuette v. Coal. to Def. Affirmative Action, 572 U.S. 291, 314 (2014) (noting that “[t]he electorate’s instruction to governmental entities not to embark upon the course of race-defined and race-based preferences was adopted, we must assume, because the voters deemed a preference system to be unwise, on account of what voters may deem its latent potential to become itself a source of the very resentments and hostilities based on race that this Nation seeks to put behind it”).

See generally Samuel Weiss & Donald Kinder, Schuette and Antibalkanization, 26 WM. & MARY BILL RTS. J. 693 (2017) (demonstrating empirically that proponents of referendum were motivated by racial resentment, not by desire for social cohesion).

For a broader critique of Schuette, see Robinson, supra note 244, at 215–26.

Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Peña, 515 U.S. 200, 242 (Stevens, J., dissenting). Indeed, notwithstanding his otherwise strongly worded dissent in Adarand, Stevens “welcome[d] the renewed endorsement” of this skepticism. Id.


See, e.g., Wygant v. Jackson Bd. of Educ., 476 U.S. 267, 313 (Stevens, J., dissenting)
voted to strike down the remedial affirmative action program in *Croson* in 1989 in full reliance on the antibalkanization logic.  

He also joined the portion of Justice O’Connor’s opinion for the Court in *Croson* which denied that there was a sufficient evidentiary basis for the program at issue by disaggregating a compelling mosaic of devastating minority under-representation in the local construction industry into a series of individual pieces and repudiating each piece separately without acknowledging their interrelation.  

*Croson*, in turn, became the basis for the extension of strict scrutiny to federal remedial legislation in *Adarand*. The resulting doctrinal landscape ensures that today, no matter what the level of government and the perceived urgency for enacting a remedial race-based program, decisionmakers will think twice before implementing such a program and inviting an inevitable (likely fatal) lawsuit.  

Shining through even Stevens’ journey to the progressive edges of the antibalkanization approach, then, is a commitment to the traditional perpetrator perspective baseline view of American democracy: well-meaning whites are willing to participate in well-crafted racial equality programs and respond with hostility and resentment to governmental race-consciousness not because of a vested interest in the status quo of racial stratification, but because they have been prodded to do so by sloppy government work. To exaggerate perhaps a little, this is a view under which we would all be better served if we just “got over the past,” set aside the difficulties and hostilities that come with working out how much the past has affected the present, and worried only about what positive things we can accomplish together in the future.  

A desire to work together harmoniously for a better future is, of course, appropriate. But as Part II suggests, simply expecting this to unfold in a society deeply grounded in racial hierarchy is to pretend to be living in a different world than the one that actually exists. Focusing less on race because doing so may stimulate racial hostility and resentment may well be logical in the world as assumed by the antibalkanization approach. However, it is neither logical nor productive in the world  

(“Rather than analyzing a case of this kind by asking whether minority teachers have some sort of special entitlement to jobs as a remedy for sins that were committed in the past, I believe that we should first ask whether the Board’s action advances the public interest in educating children for the future.”).  


252 *Id.* at 498–506.  

253 Even in his *Adarand* dissent, Stevens noted that the Congressional program at issue was acceptable to him because while perhaps “in part a remedy for past discrimination,” it was “most importantly a forward-looking response to practical problems faced by minority subcontractors.” *Adarand*, 515 U.S. at 261–62 (Stevens, J., dissenting).  

254 Moreover, by suggesting that remedial uses of race are the least likely to be appropriate, these decisions fortify the self-perception of White people as presumptively innocent of any involvement in or benefit from the troubling history of race that antibalkanization Justices are willing to acknowledge in the abstract. *See Simson, supra* note 136, at 693–94.  

255 *See supra* note 34 and accompanying text.
that actually is. Based on this disconnect, the antibalkanization approach downplays and discourages a focus on the continuing influence of white supremacy in everyday life and makes it more difficult to address this influence through law.256 This is the regressive reality of the antibalkanization approach.

II. ANTIBALKANIZATION ACTUALITIES—RACIAL HIERARCHY AND THE STRUCTURAL DIMENSIONS OF RACIAL RESENTMENT

Absent from the antibalkanization approach’s perpetrator-perspective-based explanation of what causes racial hostility and resentment among whites is the elephant in the room: America’s long-standing racial hierarchy that is grounded in notions of white supremacy. The regressive reality of the approach can be traced to the fact that it overlooks the structural influence of this hierarchy on racial dynamics generally, and on white racial hostility and resentment specifically. In this hierarchy, whites, as a group, continue to occupy a preferred position across all important aspects of social life257 and the privileges of whiteness confer important psychic and status benefits to all who can access them,258 regardless of how privileged they may be on other indicators.259 As a result, whites as a group have a deep-seated interest

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256 My use of the term “white supremacy” reflects a broad and structural definition, summarized powerfully by Frances Lee Ansley:

By ‘white supremacy’ I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings . . . . The term ‘white supremacy’ is emphatically not used here to inflate rhetoric, or to deny that some forms of white supremacy are more virulent than others . . . . On the other hand, I fail to see how Americans can avoid recognizing that we still live in a white supremacist system.


in maintaining this racial hierarchy. This Part argues that this interest in protecting a dominant hierarchy position, and responding to a perception of threats to it, are the most likely sources of white racial hostility and resentment in response to government racial equality efforts—not a bias cascade that is triggered by the government using race “too much.” Social science research from numerous contexts supports this argument.

A. Racial Hierarchy and Threats in the Social Psychology of Race

Social scientists have found the concept of racial hierarchy crucial for accurately describing race relations and the social psychology of race in the United States. For example, Social Dominance Theory (SDT) has built a broad research program around explaining the mechanisms by which group-based hierarchies—of which racial hierarchy is the most prominent example—develop and remain remarkably stable over time. Among the important and consistent findings of SDT is that members of dominant racial groups (including whites in the United States), on the whole, “will be more supportive of group-based hierarchy than racial minorities,” in large part because the re-creation of group-based hierarchy is most in their self-interest. As a result, they are more likely to engage in a wide range of behaviors, have policy preferences, stereotypes, and attitudes, and support ideologies that are likely to maintain or enhance existing racial hierarchy. In other words, because white Americans benefit from America’s racial hierarchy, they are motivated to protect it. Most importantly for this Article, a number of studies in the circumstances. Whites suffer hardships, and sometimes greater hardships than particular minorities; however, Whites’ non-racial hardships are irrelevant to racial privilege.”.

See, e.g., Cho, supra note 109, at 122 (“Logically, . . . whites have a vested interest in retaining advantageous racial hierarchies, structures and cultures—the property value of whiteness—and may be expected to defend political and material advantages over peoples of color.”). The relevance for law of social science research describing this social dominance interest has improperly been ignored by most legal scholarship and should be analyzed in greater depth. See generally Simson, supra note 35.

See also Bartlett, supra note 24 (exploring role of threat in explaining why current law is more hostile to race-based than to gender-based affirmative action programs).

Jim Sidanius & Felicia Pratto, Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression 61 (1999) (“[F]or most of U.S. history, race . . . has been and remains the primary basis of social stratification.”).

For a detailed discussion of Social Dominance Theory and related research, as well as an application to employment discrimination doctrine, see Simson, supra note 35.

Id. at 1050. In the terminology of SDT, this means that they have a higher “social dominance orientation” (SDO), which is an individual difference variable that measures people’s relative support and preference for group inequality and for social systems to be structured as group-based hierarchies. Id. at 1048–49.

Id. at 1057–58.

See generally id. at 1047–62.
SDT tradition suggest that white Americans become especially protective of racial hierarchy when it is perceived to be under threat. While SDT is not specifically focused on the role of threats in race relations, its findings on the connection between hierarchy threats and hierarchy-protective behavior of white Americans are consistent with the predictions of other sociological and social psychological theories that are more directly concerned with the role of threat.

For example, according to group position theory, race relations, and in particular the attitudes and behavior of whites vis-à-vis racial minorities, are driven to a significant extent by a sense of dominant group position. In this view, the behavior and views of whites, the dominant group, are influenced not only by feelings of white superiority, ideas about minorities as different and alien, and white claims to priority access to certain rights, resources, and status, but also by “a perception of threat from members of a subordinate group who harbor a desire for a greater share of dominant group members’ prerogatives.” When whites perceive such a threat to their group position, they will often react with fear, apprehension, anger, and resentment and act to protect their dominant group position.

Even more specifically, intergroup threat theory has developed a comprehensive account of the ways in which different kinds of threats affect intergroup relations, including race relations. According to this theory, there are both “realistic threats,” which “refer to concerns about physical harm or a loss of power and/or resources”; and “symbolic threats,” which “refer . . . to [] concern[s] about the integrity or validity of the ingroup’s meaning system.” Both types of threats play the important role

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267 See, e.g., Eric D. Knowles et al., On the Malleability of Ideology: Motivated Construals of Color Blindness, 96 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCH. 857 (2009) (explaining how under threat, White people with higher preferences for group-based hierarchy construe colorblindness as procedural justice rather than distributive justice mandate because doing so protects existing hierarchy to a greater extent); Kimberly Rios Morrison & Oscar Ybarra, The Effects of Realistic Threat and Group Identification on Social Dominance Orientation, 44 J. EXPERIMENTAL SOC. PSYCH. 156 (2008) (finding that under threat, White people can exhibit higher levels of hierarchy preference).


269 Id. at 449.

270 Id. at 450; see also Michelle Adams, Intergroup Rivalry, Anti-Competitive Conduct and Affirmative Action, 82 B.U. L. REV. 1089, 1096–1109 (2002) (relying on SDT and group position theory, as well as social identity theory and realistic group conflict theory in analyzing race relations as a form of intergroup competition).


272 Id. at 257.

273 Id. at 256. Both realistic and symbolic threats, moreover, exist both at the individual and at the group level, so that in total the theory posits “four basic types of intergroup threat: realistic group threats, symbolic group threats, realistic individual threats, and symbolic individual threats.” Id. at 258.
of mediating how different aspects of existing relationships between racial groups, including differences in “group power, relative status, group size, and prior intergroup conflict” can lead to negative intergroup outcomes, including whites experiencing negative emotions such as fear, anger, and resentment;\textsuperscript{274} whites endorsing negative stereotypes of racial minorities as well as negative attitudes toward them;\textsuperscript{275} and whites engaging in negative behavior such as discrimination against racial minorities.\textsuperscript{276}

Taken together, these research projects suggest that the behavior, feelings, and emotions of whites with regard to the distribution of societal resources is driven to a significant extent by a combination of the desire to protect their dominant position in the existing racial hierarchy and the sense of threat to this dominant position that whites experience in a given situation.\textsuperscript{277}

At first glance, these points may seem mundane and self-evident. But on closer inspection, they undermine the basic foundations of the antibalkanization approach—and thus of current equal protection law on race-conscious governmental equality efforts. For one, they call into question the approach’s baseline view that most white Americans can generally be assumed to be well-meaning participants in shared efforts to accomplish greater racial equality so long as those efforts are properly structured by the government. After all, if white Americans as a group are motivated to protect \textit{racial hierarchy} and ward off threats to it, it seems equally, if not more, reasonable to assume that the default response to progress toward racial equality will be resistance rather than cooperation.\textsuperscript{278} Moreover, if it is the loss of

\textsuperscript{274} Id. at 264.
\textsuperscript{275} Id. at 269–70.
\textsuperscript{276} Id. at 271.
\textsuperscript{278} This is not meant to be a simplistic point that White Americans are “bad people” or riven by racial animus. From a critical perspective, it seems “understandable” that many White people would have the described sentiments given basic self-interest and the history and power relations of race in the United States. Members of other groups in dominant positions often also exhibit similar hierarchy-related interests. See, e.g., Kteily & McClanahan, \textit{supra} note 277, at 80 (“Despite individual variability, advantaged groups are typically more supportive of hierarchy, threatened by changes to the status quo, and motivated to protect the privileges associated with their continued dominance.”). But regardless of whether they are “understandable” or not, the social psychological findings discussed in this Part are inconsistent with the assumptions of the antibalkanization approach and thus must be taken seriously in
race-based status and position in the racial hierarchy as such that is threatening to whites and causes stereotyping, anger, hostility, and resentment, it would seem erroneous to attach as much significance as the antibalkanization approach does to whether race is being used too much or too explicitly in a particular government intervention. After all, even interventions that don’t explicitly rely on race as well as broad changes in race relations generally should be expected to cause the same sentiments so long as they are perceived to be threatening the racial hierarchy.279 The following sections show how this indeed seems to be the case.

I discuss two different sets of research. The first set on the anticipated demographic shift of the United States from a majority-white to a “majority-minority” nation and related studies on “racial progress” shows that it does not take race-conscious intervention by the government at all to generate white racial hostility and resentment. Rather, it takes a threat to, and perceived possible interference with, the dominant hierarchy status of whites. This is so even if this threat is fairly impersonal, non-individualized, and still quite far off into the future. The second set of research shows that even when race-conscious government action in pursuit of greater racial equality is involved, white racial hostility and resentment is to a significant extent a response to hierarchy-related threats, not to whether the government used race “too much.”

B. Racial Threat, Hostility, and Resentment Without Government Action: Research on the “Majority-Minority Nation” and Racial Progress

In 2008, the Census Bureau projected that by the middle of the twenty-first century the United States would move from a majority-white to a “majority-minority” nation.280 I refer to this projection as the “majority-minority shift.” In a country in the analysis of racial equality law. This is not, and should not be, an exercise in racial essentialism. See supra note 21. My discussion is not meant to suggest, and social science research would not support, that all White Americans will automatically think and behave in a particular way. But there are patterns in thought and behavior that social science has shown to be connected to racial group membership in important ways and that must be considered carefully.

279 Cf. Samuel R. Bagenstos, Universalism and Civil Rights (with Notes on Voting Rights after Shelby), 123 YALE L.J. 2838, 2864–65 (2014) (questioning universal accuracy of argument “that if a law specifically treats people differently based on their group status . . . then it will send the message that group status matters, but if a law is not specifically framed in group-based or targeted terms, then it will not send such a message” because while plausible, “it is just as plausible that many laws will have a social meaning that does not turn on such formalities,” for example because “the public understands universalist approaches as really focusing their benefits on particular groups” even if this is not done in explicit terms).

which citizenship was for long periods explicitly restricted to Whites,\textsuperscript{281} and in which immigration has also often been heavily regulated by race in favor of White ethnic groups,\textsuperscript{282} the projection of such a shift was a major development. A detailed social science research program has developed to investigate its consequences. Of particular importance to this Article, this research program has uncovered that making whites aware of the shift creates a perceived threat to whites’ dominant position in the existing racial hierarchy.\textsuperscript{283} In turn, the experience of this threat leads Whites to respond in numerous ways that might protect their position—including bias, hostility, anger, and resentment toward other racial groups.

At the most basic level, researchers have found that when whites are told about the majority-minority shift, they express greater racial bias, both explicit and implicit, against racial minorities. Thus, in a set of studies by Craig and Richeson, Whites who were told about the shift expressed greater preferences for their own racial group and discomfort with other racial groups on an explicit survey, and greater implicit bias against racial minorities on the Implicit Association Test, compared to control populations.\textsuperscript{284} Importantly, the authors found that it was the perceived threat to their societal status that explained whites’ greater expression of racial bias toward racial minorities when exposed to the demographic shift information.\textsuperscript{285}

In isolation, this result might suggest that finding out about an increase in the racial minority population might simply reflect an increase in the perceived salience of racial minorities, leading to a strengthening of pre-existing biases and negative
evaluations of these groups independent of concerns for the position of Whites in the racial hierarchy. However, additional research shows that this is not the case. Becoming aware of the majority-minority shift not only increases negative evaluations of racial minorities, it also increases positive evaluations of whites and concerns about their future position in American society.286 This suggests that what drives the reaction of Whites to this fundamental change in the structure of American society is not simply negative feelings or stereotypes about racial minorities in the abstract that are triggered in response to their projected growth in numbers. Rather, the reaction of whites to this shift represents an effort to respond to a threat to the dominant position of whites in the existing racial hierarchy and a desire to protect that position.

For example, research has found that making Whites aware of the majority-minority shift leads Whites to expect higher levels of anti-White discrimination in the future, indeed possibly leading Whites to expect “that antiwhite discrimination in the future would be strikingly more than in the present.”288 Going against the assumptions of the antibalkanization approach, moreover, whites in these studies expected greater anti-White discrimination in the future even if they were told that in a future majority-minority nation “individuals and institutions will not consider racial category information” in their distributive decisions.289 Threat to the dominant position of whites in the racial hierarchy appeared to play an important role in driving these reactions. Interestingly, the threat that seemed to be driving whites’ concern about future anti-white discrimination was not a threat to their dominance in material status, such as in terms of income and wealth, but rather a threat to their dominant cultural position as the prototypical representative of American culture—what researchers have termed “prototypicality threat.”290 When told that in the future majority-minority America minorities would “appreciate and conform to the mainstream culture,” Whites no longer expected greater anti-white discrimination.291

This is consistent with other research findings that “prototypicality threat” leads whites who either perceive, or are told about, white population decreases in the future to express significantly greater support for the idea that racial minorities

286 Craig & Richeson, supra note 280, at 757.
288 Craig & Richeson, supra note 287, at 152.
289 Craig & Richeson, supra note 287, at 11.
290 Id. at 13. This is consistent with the idea that White supremacy has both material and cultural dimensions, see supra note 256, and that threats to White racial status and position in the racial hierarchy can be both material and symbolic. See supra notes 269, 271–72.
should assimilate to the mainstream culture (a culture currently dominated and represented prototypically by Whites); and to express significantly lower endorsement for the idea that racial diversity should be valued and encouraged.292 Similarly, researchers have found that telling whites about the majority-minority shift leads them to express greater sympathy toward their own racial group (but not toward racial minorities),293 and that this increased sympathy is a function of, and response to, perceived intergroup threat.294 Moreover, the threat of increasing demographic diversity appears to affect the political preferences of whites and shift them in a more racially conservative direction as well.295

Finally, and of most direct application for this Article, multiple studies have found that exposing whites to a decline in their numerical majority status in the future leads such whites to exhibit greater anger and fear toward minorities, and that this relationship is connected to a significant extent to perceptions of threat. In separate studies in 2012 and 2018, Outten and colleagues found that exposing white Americans to information about the majority-minority shift led those whites to express significantly more anger and fear toward racial minorities than whites in a control group.296 Moreover, the 2018 studies confirmed what was only an indirect prediction

292 Danbold & Huo, supra note 283, at 213–16.
294 Id. at 20. In this research project, the mediating role of intergroup threat (measured as perceptions of threat as well as perceptions of loss of influence generated by increased diversity) was only measured in the second of two studies, which used White Canadian subjects, and not in the first study, which used White American subjects. Id. at 16. However, given the generally identical nature of the relevant findings, and the general role of threats in driving White Americans’ reactions to demographic decline discussed in this section, it is fair to assume that a similar mediating role of threat underlies the results in the American sample as well.
295 In relation to the 2016 election, for example, Major and colleagues found that exposing White people to the majority-minority shift increased perceived group status threat, and that group status threat served as a mediator explaining greater positivity toward, and likelihood of voting for, Donald Trump, greater support for anti-immigration policies, and greater opposition to political correctness for White people who were highly identified with their Whiteness. Brenda Major, Alison Blodorn & Gregory Major Blascovich, The Threat of Increasing Diversity: Why Many White Americans Support Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election, 21 GRP. PROCESSES & INTERGRP. RELS. 931, 934–37 (2018); see also Diana C. Mutz, Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote, 115 PNAS E4330 (2018). Researchers have also found different types of threats to the racial status of White people to predict racial resentment and consequent support for the conservative “Tea Party” movement. See Robb Willer, Matthew Feinberg & Rachel Wets, Threats to Racial Status Promote Tea Party Support Among White Americans (2016), https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2770186 [https://perma.cc/Y3AB-9438].
296 See Outten et al., supra note 283, at 6–7 (2018 study); Outten et al., supra note 293 (2012 study). In both studies, “anger” was conceptualized as a composite measure of feelings of anger, annoyance, and resentment.
in the 2012 studies\textsuperscript{297}: that perceptions of intergroup threat and increased amounts of anger and fear toward minorities go together when whites consider the implications of their predicted numerical decline. Whites exposed to the majority-minority shift perceived both larger amounts of intergroup threat\textsuperscript{298} and felt an increased amount of anger and fear toward minorities, though only if they perceived the current status of whites as legitimate.\textsuperscript{299} Summing up their 2012 studies, the authors concluded:

[T]he results of these two studies provide convincing evidence that merely thinking about impending ethnic demographic changes can have important psychological consequences for Whites in North America. . . . [G]rowing ethnic diversity is experienced as threatening to Whites, and this heightened sense of threat can increase negative feelings toward ethnic minorities and increase the degree to which Whites identify with their race and feel sympathy toward their ingroup.\textsuperscript{300}

These dynamics, moreover, are not limited to the particular demography-related threats represented by the majority-minority shift. Similar research that has investigated the reaction of white Americans to racial “milestones,” or indications of racial progress in general, confirms the above patterns. For example, research by Wilkins and colleagues found a similar effect on whites’ perceptions of anti-white discrimination as that discussed above when the threat to the dominant status of whites was represented by perceptions of racial progress in general.\textsuperscript{301} In their study, both whites who independently perceived there to be greater racial progress\textsuperscript{302} and whites who were told about racial progress as part of the experiment\textsuperscript{303} perceived greater

\textsuperscript{297} Similar to the point noted above regarding sympathy, see supra note 294 and accompanying text., in their 2012 studies, Outten and colleagues did not investigate the role of threat in their American sample, but did find that threat mediated the increased levels of anger in the Canadian sample. Outten et al., supra note 293, at 20.

\textsuperscript{298} Intergroup threat was operationalized in this study as a combination of worry about the future place of White people in the United States, threats experienced by growing diversity, and ideas that White people will not benefit from growing diversity. Outten et al., supra note 283, at 4.

\textsuperscript{299} Because the focus of the 2018 study was on the role of perceived status legitimacy as a moderator of anger, fear, and threat, the authors did not conduct a separate analysis of intergroup threat as a mediator of the relationship between reading about White numerical decline and expressions of anger and fear. Outten et al., supra note 283, at 2.

\textsuperscript{300} Outten et al., supra note 293, at 23.


\textsuperscript{302} Participants rated their agreement with various items such as whether Black people are now better off than before, and whether the election of the first Black president showed strides toward racial equality. Id. at 441.

\textsuperscript{303} Participants “read about high-status racial minorities in traditionally White positions
levels of anti-white bias in society\textsuperscript{304} so long as they believed in the legitimacy of the current social system.\textsuperscript{305} While the authors did not directly measure whether racial progress specifically represented a threat to such whites, they found that affirming the participants’ sense of self (and thus alleviating a possible threat to the sense of self) eliminated the effect of racial progress on perceived anti-white bias.\textsuperscript{306} Thus, they concluded that their results were “consistent with the perspective that racial progress is threatening to individuals with stronger [system-legitimacy] endorsement and that this threat corresponds to greater perceptions of anti-White bias.”\textsuperscript{307} In a follow-up study, Wilkins and colleagues moreover found that exposure to racial progress threatens whites’ sense of self as measured implicitly via indications of self-worth.\textsuperscript{308} Similarly, research by Skinner and Cheadle found that exposing whites to threats to their political power by priming the historic importance of the election of Barack Obama led Whites to exhibit greater implicit bias against Black people,\textsuperscript{309} just like exposure to the majority-minority shift did in other studies.

This social science research strongly suggests that what ultimately drives negative reactions by whites to potential changes in race relations, including anger and resentment toward racial minorities, is an acute sense of dominant group position in America’s racial hierarchy and perceptions of threat to this position and its privileges—including by impersonal forces such as demographic changes or broad notions of “racial progress.” This suggests that in adopting a perpetrator perspective, the antibalkanization approach underestimates the structural influence and power of the interests that a long-standing social regime of racial hierarchy based on an ideology of white supremacy creates and nurtures. It also suggests that the approach misunderstands how much progress toward substantive equal opportunity can be achieved by trying to avoid white racial resentment and hostility through requirements that equality interventions don’t focus “too much” on race. Additional research connecting white racial hostility and resentment more directly to government programs that benefit racial minorities further supports this claim.

(e.g., Barack Obama, Condoleezza Rice) and further read that social mobility is generalized to racial minorities in the United States (e.g., progress in college enrollment and income).” \textsuperscript{304}  Id. at 442.

\textsuperscript{305} Participants rated their agreement with various items such as whether prejudice and discrimination against White people was on the rise, and whether reverse racism was pervasive. \textit{Id.} at 441–43.  

\textsuperscript{306} \textit{Id.} at 444.

\textsuperscript{307} \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{308} Clara L. Wilkins et al., \textit{The Threat of Racial Progress and the Self-Protective Nature of Perceiving Anti-White Bias}, 20 GRP. PROCESSES & INTERGRP. RELS. 801, 808 (2017) (finding that study results are “consistent with our argument that racial progress threatens the status hierarchy and thus, Whites—who traditionally occupy dominant positions in society”).

\textsuperscript{309} Skinner & Cheadle, \textit{supra} note 284, at 548–49.
C. Racial Threat, Hostility, and Resentment, and Government Actions in Pursuit of Racial Equality

Research that investigates the views and reactions of whites to actual racial equality programs also suggests that racial hierarchy, and perceived threats to the dominant position of whites within it, are the key drivers of white racial hostility and resentment related to such programs—not the extent to which race is invoked as such. This is illustrated both by research on programs that explicitly consider race as a factor—such as affirmative action programs—and programs that are perceived as primarily benefitting racial minorities without explicitly relying on race—such as welfare programs.310

With respect to affirmative action programs, a useful starting point for analysis is that there is an “American racial hierarchy in views of affirmative action.”311 That is, the views of members of different racial groups on whether affirmative action programs are likely to have negative societal effects, and their relative levels of support for the practice, tend to track the general position of those groups in the racial hierarchy of the United States: Whites consistently evaluate affirmative action most negatively and support it least, Black Americans evaluate it least negatively and support it most, and Latinx and Asian Americans are usually somewhere in-between.312 This relationship persists even if other explanatory variables for views on affirmative action (for example, general conservatism or individualism) are taken into account,313 and generally widens as affirmative action programs become “stronger” in nature (i.e., use race more decisively) and thus more directly intervene in existing resource and status allocations.314 In other words, when it comes to views on affirmative action as a general matter, “race matters,”315 those who have most to

310 Cf. Lawrence Bobo, Race, Interests, and Beliefs About Affirmative Action: Unanswered Questions and New Directions, 41 AM. BEHAV. SCIEN. 985, 999–1000 (1998) (“[A]ffirmative action is about the place racial groups should occupy in American society . . . . Despite all the high, abstract, and moralizing rhetoric, affirmative action is about concrete matters of who gets what.”).
311 Id. at 991.
312 See, e.g., id. at 993 (views on perceived negative effects of affirmative action); David A. Harrison et al., Understanding Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action Programs in Employment: Summary and Meta-Analysis of 35 Years of Research, 91 J. APPLIED PSYCH. 1013, 1021 (2006) (results of meta-analysis of 35 years of research on affirmative action programs in employment show that White people have least positive attitudes, Black people most positive attitudes, and Hispanic Americans attitudes that fall somewhere in-between).
313 Bobo, supra note 310, at 993–95.
314 See, e.g., Harrison et al., supra note 312, at 1021, 1027 (“When moderation does exist, more prescriptive AAPs (e.g., preferential treatment for those in a particular demographic category) tend to widen the attitudinal divide across races and genders, as well as accentuate the effects of personal self-interest, beliefs about discrimination suffered by the target group, and racism.”).
315 Bobo, supra note 310, at 995.
lose in terms of their position in the racial hierarchy are most likely to reject intervention, and they do so in relation to the severity of that intervention.

As a result, it should not come as a surprise that research on threats has found a connection between the views of whites on affirmative action and threats to their material and symbolic status as the dominant group in the racial hierarchy. Consider the research of Renfro and colleagues, which investigated how perceptions of threat relate to the views of whites on both affirmative action as a policy, and on the beneficiaries of affirmative action.316 In an initial study, they found that whites’ responses to survey questions that framed affirmative action in terms of threats to the material and symbolic/cultural interests of whites317 significantly predicted whether study participants supported affirmative action as a policy as well as their views on the beneficiaries of affirmative action. Specifically, perceptions of realistic threat were strong predictors of whites rejecting affirmative action as a policy, and symbolic threats were strong predictors of negative attitudes of whites toward the beneficiaries of affirmative action.318 These threats, moreover, mediated the significant influence of “personal relevance” (i.e., agreement with the notion that affirmative action would have detrimental effects on a participants’ own chances or of those close to them such as family and friends) on participants’ attitudes toward affirmative action and its beneficiaries.319 A second study not only replicated these basic results, but also showed that perceptions of threat mediated the effects of overt racism, negative affect toward Black people, and political conservatism on opposition to affirmative action.320 In other words, consistent with the research discussed


317 For example, realistic threat questions asked respondents to rate their agreement with statements such as whether affirmative action leads to costly lawsuits that hurt businesses and hostility directed at White people. Id. at 46. Symbolic threat questions asked respondents to rate their agreement with statements such as whether affirmative action poses threats to the cultural practices of the majority and whether beneficiaries of affirmative action have the same work values as the majority. Id. at 47.

318 Renfro et al., supra note 316, at 50–51. In this study, the authors measured negative stereotypes as a separate racial threat category, which was also predictive of negative attitudes toward the beneficiaries of affirmative action. Id. Since the study, threat theorists have re-conceptualized stereotypes as subcomponents of realistic or symbolic threats, depending on whether the stereotypes at issue concern the potential for actual harm to the ingroup (in which case they would function as realistic threats) or the potential to undermine the values and beliefs of the ingroup (symbolic threats). See Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios, supra note 271, at 257–58. In the Renfro study, the stereotypes at issue (lazy, competent, unfriendly, resilient (strong), unreliable, compassionate, arrogant, selfish, opportunistic, intelligent, and hardworking) are mostly value-based and thus it makes sense that they exhibited a greater influence on White attitudes toward affirmative action beneficiaries, in conjunction with the “symbolic threat” measure used in the study.

319 Renfro et al., supra note 316, at 51–53.

320 See id. at 62–64.
in the previous section, perceptions of threat to the material and symbolic dominance of whites in the American racial hierarchy drives whites’ rejection of affirmative action as a policy, and their negative views of the people who benefit from it, to a significant extent.\textsuperscript{321}

Importantly, and closer to the specific point made in this Article, recent research has convincingly suggested that a governmental program need not be explicitly or predominantly based on race in how it distributes benefits or opportunities for racial threats to operate and to generate white racial resentment and white opposition. Even in non-race-based programs, racial threats and racial resentment can operate as “complementary accounts of white Americans’ racial attitudes.”\textsuperscript{322} Consider Wetts and Willer’s recent investigation into the sources of white support for, or opposition to, welfare programs. Their study of welfare programs is particularly instructive because such programs are “formally race-blind”\textsuperscript{323} and have not been put in place with race as the “predominant factor” in determining who gets to benefit from them. Therefore, they are not the kind of program that the antibalkanization approach conceives of as a likely source of white racial hostility and resentment. However, welfare programs are “perceived in racialized terms” in that racial minorities are perceived to be the prototypical beneficiary of such programs.\textsuperscript{324} Thus, they are a proxy for the more “diffuse” types of race-conscious but facially race-neutral racial equality programs that some antibalkanization proponents have proposed as preferable solutions over explicitly race-based interventions.\textsuperscript{325}

What Wetts and Willer found in a series of studies about the relationship between racial threat, racial resentment, and support for welfare programs illustrates all of the pieces summarized in this Part put together: Whites care about their dominant position in the racial hierarchy; when there is a perceived threat to this position, even if quite diffuse, Whites respond negatively, including by showing heightened racial resentment; this response to the threat drives Whites’ negative reactions to the source of

\textsuperscript{321} A similar finding made by Social Dominance Theory researchers is that people with higher levels of social dominance orientation (SDO) may be comparatively more likely to support “stronger” types of affirmative action programs, including quota policies, than people with a lower SDO, but only if they expect that the beneficiaries of the policy will remain on the bottom of the hierarchy in a particular context—that is, when they do not threaten a change in existing hierarchy. Geoffrey C. Ho & Miguel M. Unzueta, \textit{Antiegalitarians for Affirmative Action? When Social Dominance Orientation Is Positively Related to Support for Egalitarian Social Policies}, 45 J. APPLIED SOC. PSYCH. 451, 453 (2015). The authors in this study used a multiracial pool of participants because their focus was on the operation of SDO and not on the specific views of Whites. However, as noted above, Whites generally have higher levels of SDO and thus should be particularly likely to exhibit this kind of reasoning.


\textsuperscript{323} \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{324} \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{325} \textit{See supra} Section I.D.
the threat, including racial equality programs; this is the case even if the source of the threat does not involve an explicit or “predominant” use of race by the government.

In their first study, Wetts and Willer investigated the relationship between threat, resentment, and welfare support by analyzing the nationally representative American National Election Studies surveys held in each presidential election year from 2000 through 2012. They found that White racial resentment rose significantly between 2004 and 2008, as well as between 2008 and 2012—which the authors suggest is in part driven by the “increased racial status threat” of perceived rising racial minority electoral power as represented most prominently by the candidacy and election of Barack Obama.326 And while they did not find a significant absolute increase in White opposition to welfare during this period, this was likely because the onset of the 2008 financial crisis intervened, temporarily buoyed relative support for welfare programs as often happens in times of economic crisis, and thus suppressed what would otherwise have been a significant absolute increase in White opposition to welfare as a result of racial status threat.327 This is illustrated by the fact that relative levels of welfare opposition between Whites and racial minorities diverged significantly, such that minorities became more supportive of welfare as the crisis began, Whites did not increase their absolute support for welfare as is otherwise common in economic downturns and even marginally decreased it, and this decrease was partially mediated by higher levels of racial resentment.328

In two follow-up experiments, Wetts and Willer provided additional evidence for the causal relationships involved. First, they found that exposing participants to threat via information about the majority-minority shift (discussed in depth above) led White participants to express both significantly higher levels of racial resentment and significantly greater opposition to welfare compared to a control group; and that the increased racial resentment mediated the effect of status threat on welfare opposition.329 Second, the authors tested in more detail the significance of White perceptions of who would benefit from a particular welfare program. They found that exposing Whites to threat by presenting projections that the racial income gap was closing led White participants to express significantly greater opposition to welfare programs, but only if such programs were described as largely benefitting racial minorities rather than largely benefitting Whites.330 Accordingly, Wetts and Willer concluded that

326 Wetts & Willer, supra note 322, at 802.
327 Id. at 804–05.
328 Id.
329 Id. at 808–10.
330 Id. at 812–14. The study design provides especially strong support for the conclusion that it was precisely the racial composition of the welfare recipients that mattered: Each participant rated their support for two different programs (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and unemployment insurance) of which one was described as primarily benefitting minorities and the other was described as primarily benefitting White people. The descriptions were then randomly varied between participants. Id. at 812.
“[w]hile white Americans often engage in impression management to appear color-blind, such efforts did not overcome the effect of racial status threat on participants’ willingness to voice heightened opposition to programs that benefit minorities.”331

III. HOPE DIES LAST—REVIVING REMEDIAL RACIAL JUSTICE APPROACHES

To summarize the main insights from the above, Part I of this Article showed how the antibalkanization approach replicates the three basic characteristics of a perpetrator perspective of racial inequality and discrimination: (1) a baseline view of American society as presumptively racially egalitarian; (2) a conviction that blameworthy perpetrators who interfere with this baseline are the main racial equality problem; and (3) a resulting doctrinal focus on policing the inappropriate behaviors of such perpetrators. Part II then reviewed social science research that challenges attributes (1) and (2) by suggesting that the structural influence of racial hierarchy on the interests, perceptions, and behaviors of White Americans makes it questionable to assume their commitment to a shared racial equality destination; and that White racial hostility and resentment is a phenomenon that unfolds in response to hierarchy threats and is not dependent on the existence of a government racial hostility perpetrator that focuses on race “too much.” This Part now challenges attribute (3) and suggests implications for how both policymakers and the Court might transcend the regressive reality of the antibalkanization approach and build on its progressive potential.

Perhaps the most important general takeaway for both policymakers and the Court is that the antibalkanization approach and the research discussed in Part II suggest different models for the relationship between governmental race-consciousness, social cohesion, and racial hostility and resentment on the path from a status quo of continued racial inequality to a desired end-state that features both racial equality and social cohesion. As illustrated in simplified form by Figure 1, the antibalkanization approach proceeds from the underlying assumption that “social cohesion is a prerequisite for equality.”332

331 Id. at 816. As Sam Bagenstos has noted, a similar dynamic likely underwrote the immediate and stark opposition by White people to race-neutral efforts to integrate suburban housing during the Nixon administration “precisely because racial minorities were understood as their principal beneficiaries.” Bagenstos, supra note 279, at 2853–55.
332 Siegel, supra note 14, at 1350.
The path to racial equality if social cohesion is a prerequisite.\(^{333}\)

This model views social cohesion as a mechanism for achieving racial equality progress that must logically precede the achievement of substantive equal opportunity. Racial hostility and resentment, by contrast, is viewed as a (perhaps the) major obstacle to the achievement of substantive equal opportunity and leads to the perpetuation of the unequal status quo instead. The impact of governmental race-consciousness on racial equality progress in this model is tied to the bias cascade. If the use of race is such that it cuts off or avoids the full course of the cascade (i.e., the government is not a racial hostility perpetrator), it is consistent with enabling social cohesion and thus supportive of racial equality progress. Such uses of race are compatible with the existing but fragile commitment of White Americans to a racially egalitarian society. But if the use of race is “too much” such that it allows the bias cascade to run its full course (i.e., the government is a racial hostility perpetrator), it subverts this commitment, destroys social cohesion, and thus prevents racial equality progress.

As illustrated by Figure 2 and based on the research described in Part II, a hierarchy-aware approach suggests instead that both social cohesion and racial hostility and resentment may be better thought of as effects of different stages of the racial equality process rather than as mechanism and obstacle, respectively.

\(^{333}\) Figures created by the author for use in this Article. Copyright David Simson 2021.
The path to equality if structural conditions of racial hierarchy, or hierarchy aware approach, is assumed.\textsuperscript{334}

In this model, both racial hostility and resentment and social cohesion are still important components, but the primary drivers of the model are the structural conditions of racial hierarchy.\textsuperscript{335} As even antibalkanization proponents acknowledge, the current status quo of American race relations is characterized by racial hierarchy: “The enduring hope is that race should not matter” but “the reality is that too often it does.”\textsuperscript{336} Achievement of the end-goal of substantive equal opportunity will thus require reducing the extent of this hierarchy.\textsuperscript{337} And as Part II suggests, because the self-understanding and interests of White Americans as a group are significantly tied to their dominant group position in this hierarchy, they will perceive such reductions as a threat and react with racial hostility and resentment.\textsuperscript{338}

\textsuperscript{334} Id.

\textsuperscript{335} This focus on structural conditions is consistent with calls by CRT scholars for replacing a perpetrator perspective with a victim perspective. See, e.g., Freeman, supra note 33, at 1053 (“The victim, or ‘condition,’ conception of racial discrimination suggests that the problem will not be solved until the conditions associated with it have been eliminated.”).

\textsuperscript{336} Parents Involved in Cnty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 551 U.S. 701, 787 (2007) (Kennedy, J., concurring); see also supra notes 71–72 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{337} This is quasi-definition. If substantive equal opportunity means “a society where race is irrelevant to personal opportunity and achievement,” Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co., 488 U.S. 469, 505–06 (1989), and racial hierarchy means that members of some racial groups, i.e., Whites, predictably have access to greater opportunity and achievement, see Ansley, supra note 256, then progress toward substantive equal opportunity requires reducing (and eventually eliminating) racial hierarchy.

\textsuperscript{338} See also Wets & Willer, supra note 322, at 818 (“Because status rank is hierarchical and zero-sum, any increases in economic or political power of lower-status groups can be
Racial hostility and resentment is thus an essentially inevitable short-term side effect of racial equality progress, not an obstacle to it.

In a hierarchy-aware model, social cohesion may or may not be conducive to racial equality progress. As social science research on the “irony of harmony” shows, under conditions of group inequality, advantaged and disadvantaged groups are more likely to interact harmoniously when they focus on commonalities between them, such as a shared “common identity” (e.g., “American”). Such harmonious commonality-based interactions can, in turn, improve the attitudes of advantaged and disadvantaged groups toward each other. However, they may simultaneously reduce both groups’ perception of how much inequality and discrimination against the disadvantaged group actually exists, and thus reduce each group’s motivation to change the unequal status quo. In other words, if it results from not confronting intergroup inequality, intergroup harmony may exist, but only as “a hollow and potentially unstable form of harmony.” The development of productive and lasting social cohesion, by contrast, likely requires first addressing unequal power relations and changing the conditions of structural inequality, along with the short-term tension that will accompany this process.

Accordingly, in a hierarchy-aware model, the impact of governmental race-consciousness on racial equality progress is tied to whether it facilitates or obstructs structural change to the racial hierarchy, not to whether it involves a racial hostility perpetrator. Race-consciousness that reduces the conditions of racial hierarchy (e.g., significant disparities in important life outcomes) is supportive of racial equality progress even if it leads to racial hostility and resentment because it threatens the hierarchy interests of White Americans. On the other hand, limiting race-consciousness to interpreted as a threat to the relative standing of dominant group members. Thus, any progress toward equality may provoke resentment on the part of dominant group members.”).

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340 Advantaged groups prefer for interactions with disadvantaged groups to be based on such a single common identity in part because this commonality focus sidesteps within-group differences, “typically reflects the characteristics, norms, and values of the majority group,” and allows to “distract[] attention away from the advantages enjoyed by the majority group.” John F. Dovidio et al., Included but Invisible? Subtle Bias, Common Identity, and the Darker Side of “We,” 10 SOC. ISSUES & POL’Y REV. 6, 17 (2016).


342 Dovidio et al., supra note 340, at 31.


344 Cf. Hutchinson, supra note 26, at 36 (“If the Supreme Court truly believes that its doctrines should promote social cohesion, then it should vigorously utilize the Equal Protection
only those forms that are unlikely to lead to White racial hostility and resentment, while possibly leading to hollow social cohesion, would permit only those interventions that interfere minimally with the hierarchy and would thus broadly perpetuate the status quo. This latter approach closely resembles the antibalkanization approach as currently practiced by the Court.

What are the implications for policymakers and the Court? For policymakers with stated racial justice commitments such as the Biden administration, the most important implication is that if they are serious about “root[ing] out systemic racism,” they will need to fully commit to pursuing decisive structural intervention even if their efforts are likely to conflict to some extent with a desire to “unify,” “lower the temperature,” and find “time to heal.” Doing so will require a break from much of past practice. In this context, it is important to remember that the Supreme Court is not the only relevant actor that has embraced a perpetrator-perspective-based antibalkanization approach to racial equality progress over the last few decades. As Derrick Bell has pointed out, prioritizing White harmony over structural racial change is a recurring phenomenon throughout American history. Similarly, as Ian Haney López has shown, such an approach has also guided the views of liberal pundits and high-level decisionmakers in the Democratic Party establishment since at least the early 1990s and through the Obama administration.

What will be required instead is a conviction that “ameliorating racial inequality is a precondition to ending racial politics” and that “[c]orrecting gross racial inequalities is necessary to make good on our social obligation to get beyond racism.” Such a conviction will be critical because it is eminently predictable that many of Biden’s proposed racial justice initiatives will trigger strong reactions as a result of the dynamics described in this Article. Take as one example Biden’s charge to forcefully implement the Fair Housing Act’s mandate to affirmatively further fair housing by taking “actions that undo historic patterns of segregation and other types of discrimination and that afford access to long-denied opportunities.”

Clause to help eradicate group-based inequities; these inequities cause more social division than diversity alone.”).

345 See Phillips, supra note 5.
346 See Phillips, supra note 5.
347 Bell, Racial Realism, supra note 61, at 372; Bell, supra note 11.
348 See supra note 8; see also HANEY LÓPEZ, supra note 3, at 228 (“Already we see some leading liberals suggesting that Democrats must continue to ‘moderate[,]’ their economic and social message, the better to avoid rekindling the ‘widespread popular disgust with the extremes to which liberal Democrats and New Left movements had gone in the late sixties and the seventies.’ Arguments like these merely reinvigorate the advice Democratic pundits have been offering since the 1970s: flee from race and flee from liberalism and the middle class too.”) (quoting JOHN JUDIS & RUY TEIXEIRA, THE EMERGING DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY 3 (2002)).
349 HANEY LÓPEZ, supra note 3, at 221 (emphasis omitted).
Emerson has analyzed in detail, if implemented forcefully, this rule has the potential to support deep structural changes to the many aspects of policymaking that have historically created residential segregation and racial inequality tied to housing. A big part of the reason is that the rule forces an explicitly race-conscious engagement with structural racial inequality in housing and empowers the victims of racial discrimination to have a voice in a process that aims for transformative and racially equitable solutions. But precisely for this reason, given the deep and multifaceted ways in which housing discrimination is connected to racial hierarchy, it will trigger the same “immense social confrontation” that issues of housing integration have long triggered historically. Policymakers in the past have pulled back in response to such hostility and resentment—and widespread housing segregation continues as a result.

For things to be different this time, the Biden administration would need to supercharge the progressive potential of the antibalkanization approach. It would need to go beyond exhibiting a basic willingness to learn about the realities of race and to support a bit more race-consciousness over time. It would also need to replace the approach’s perpetrator perspective with a structural view of racial inequality. The current antibalkanization approach would view White racial hostility and resentment resulting from changes to the racial hierarchy of housing as counterproductive to long-term equality progress, and as the result of the government moving too fast or “too much” toward racial equality. It would slow down interventions in response. A hierarchy-aware approach, by contrast, would understand based on both historical evidence and social science research that this hostility and resentment is a response to hierarchy threat which realistically cannot be avoided on the path forward.


351 See Emerson, supra note 15, at 204 (“The issues HUD asks . . . participants to consider . . . and open up for public discussion, cover a vast terrain of local policy issues, from zoning regulation, to the placement of schools, to access to public services.”); see also id. at 174–78, 203–07.

352 Id. at 188, 203–04 (noting that the rule calls for input from “the public, including individuals historically excluded because of characteristics protected by the Fair Housing Act,” and aims to “empower program participants and to foster diversity and strength of community by overcoming historic patterns of segregation, reducing racial or ethnic concentrations of poverty, and responding to identified disproportionate housing needs”).

353 See, e.g., RICHARD ROTHSTEIN, THE COLOR OF LAW: A FORGOTTEN HISTORY OF HOW OUR GOVERNMENT SEGREGATED AMERICA (2017); Emerson, supra note 15, at 167 (“Housing policy lies at the foundation of the racial hierarchies that permeate society, determining access to employment, education, and wealth.”).

354 Emerson, supra note 15, at 204.


356 See, e.g., Bagenstos, supra note 279, at 2853–55.

toward meaningful racial equality. It would also recognize that this hostility and resentment analytically need not be avoided even if lasting social cohesion is part of the long-term goal. In other words, if the administration’s goal is truly to “root out systemic racism,” it would need to commit to sustained and vigorous policy implementation even if this was incompatible with “lower[ing] the temperature” in the short term.

With respect to the Court, the analysis in this Article suggests the need for a shift in the Court’s understanding of the role of judicial review in the antibalkanization approach’s core territory. As illustrated in Figure 3, the Court’s current approach views the role of judicial review as that of policing governmental racial hostility perpetrators.

The Court’s remedial approach focuses on specific government actors rather than societal discrimination. 358

As part of this role-understanding, the Court has particularly severely cabined the discretion of government actors to rely on race in pursuit of remedial goals. For fear that broader programs cause counterproductive racial hostility and resentment, the Court allows only those programs that precisely remedy identified discrimination by a specific government actor, but not those that respond to “societal discrimination.” 359 Such an approach is understandably tempting. It promotes the Court to the elevated position of protecting racial equality progress from the misguided actions of representative government—a position the Court has claimed for itself since at least Brown v. Board of Education. 360

However, it also ignores the reality of American racial dynamics. As illustrated in Figure 4, a hierarchy-aware approach would recognize that to facilitate achieving

358 Simson, supra note 333.
359 See supra Sections I.D and F.
the goal of substantive equal opportunity, legal doctrine and judicial review need to support, or at a minimum not undermine, structural changes to the conditions of racial hierarchy.

A hierarchy-aware approach employs judicial review to support structural conditions of racial hierarchy.361

This, in turn, has very different implications for remedial race-conscious equality interventions, in particular those pursuing an interest in remedying “societal discrimination.” From a structural standpoint, remedying societal discrimination is an especially compelling interest. Properly understood, societal discrimination refers to the multiple ways in which people and institutions instantiate racial hierarchy in their daily interactions across the many domains of social life. It is evidenced by significant racial disparities in life outcomes, which in turn are inextricably connected to disparities in access to opportunity.362 Thus, in a hierarchy-aware model, government actors who choose to reduce such disparities in their sphere of influence through race-conscious means should have significant discretion in how to go about doing so, regardless of whether there is evidence of prior “identified discrimination” by themselves.

The antibalkanization approach objects to such discretion because it believes that absent proof of identified discrimination (1) such remedies necessarily involve improper governmental stereotyping about the causal role of race (as opposed to,

361 Simson, supra note 333.
362 For examples of the inextricably interconnected nature of racial disparities and equal opportunity in the context of housing, economic opportunity, and democratic participation, see, e.g., Anderson, supra note 64, at 1199–1207.
say, choice\textsuperscript{363}) in creating the disparities;\textsuperscript{364} and (2) such stereotyping then starts the bias cascade and obstructs racial equality progress by causing counterproductive racial hostility and resentment.\textsuperscript{365}

But both beliefs are flawed. Regarding (2), as noted above, the hostility and resentment that is generated by programs that remedy societal discrimination is better understood not as the product of governmental stereotyping and the bias cascade it initiates, but as an essentially inevitable side effect of the fact that such programs represent the ultimate threat to racial hierarchy and thus will be resisted by those with an interest in protecting their dominant position in it.\textsuperscript{366} Regarding (1), as Noah Zatz has suggested, significant racial disparities in life outcomes are causally related to race to some extent—when such disparities exist and a distributive decision-making process ignores them, some members of the disadvantaged group lose out on opportunities simply because of their race.\textsuperscript{367} This does not mean that all members of the disadvantaged group necessarily do so,\textsuperscript{368} nor that the specific governmental actor whose distributive decisions are at issue is necessarily responsible for creating this injury.\textsuperscript{369} But it does mean that significant disparities reliably indicate the presence of a race-based injury for which a race-conscious remedy is the most appropriate and effective response.\textsuperscript{370} Contra the antibalkanization approach, the fact that the government actor who has an opportunity to remedy the disparity is not responsible for its existence does not minimize the propriety of the remedy.\textsuperscript{371} "To hold otherwise is like holding that a victim of a knife wound may not receive surgical treatment, except at the hands of the assailant."\textsuperscript{372}

At a very minimum, this Article’s analysis shows that the accuracy and implications of these contested assumptions are subject to what Rick Hills has called “reasonable and deep disagreement” (RADD).\textsuperscript{373} As Hills suggests, in a federalist

\textsuperscript{363} See, e.g., Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co., 488 U.S. 469, 507 (1989) (criticizing “completely unrealistic assumption that minorities will choose [a particular trade] in lockstep proportion to their representation in the local population”).

\textsuperscript{364} See supra note 195.

\textsuperscript{365} See supra notes 196–98.

\textsuperscript{366} See supra note 277 and accompanying text.


\textsuperscript{368} Id. at 1395–96, 1408–10.

\textsuperscript{369} Id. at 1406–08.

\textsuperscript{370} Anderson, supra note 64, at 1243–44 (“[W]hen the state’s purpose is explicitly race-conscious—for example, when it aims to remedy the disadvantages that black businesses suffer due to the continuing legacies of White supremacy—its use of racial means is not only clearly relevant to its purpose, but more narrowly tailored to that purpose than race-neutral means could be.”).

\textsuperscript{371} Id. at 1260–66 (explaining how proceeding otherwise would essentially impose a duty to perpetuate injustice on governmental actors).

\textsuperscript{372} Id. at 1262.

system like the United States, one resolution to such a RADD that shows “equal concern and respect” for the contending sides is not to impose a broad national resolution of the contested question—like the Supreme Court has done by constitutionalizing its strict limits on race-consciousness—but instead to “devolve the choice” between available reasonable alternatives “to subnational governments.”374 Such an approach would involve a more deferential constitutional review standard that would allow different state actors to make different reasonable baseline assumptions, including the hierarchy-aware assumptions outlined above, about the causes of persistent racial inequality and the need for race-conscious responses to address them.375 State actors would not be mandated to make and act upon hierarchy-aware assumptions.376 But they would be permitted to do so and to thereby show “equal concern and respect” for the views of those who believe that a purely perpetrator-based approach to solving racial inequality is bound to fail and that a victim-based approach ought to be implemented.377 As Hills notes, a decentralizing approach to constitutional RADDs such as that over the sources of, and solutions to, persistent racial inequality may actually be a more likely “basis for social peace and civil discourse” than a one-size-fits-all solution imposed by the Court,378 even setting aside the Court’s mistaken factual assumptions about the social dynamics of racial equality discussed above.

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374 Id. at 950.
375 Cf. id. at 963–64 (explaining how such an approach would apply to discretionary religious accommodations).
376 Of course, strong arguments can be made, and have been made by CRT scholars, that a national resolution in favor of a structural, hierarchy-aware view of the Equal Protection Clause that includes a mandate for race-conscious remediation might also be appropriate. See, e.g., Charles Lawrence III, Unconscious Racism Revisited: Reflections on the Impact and Origins of the Id, the Ego, and Equal Protection, 40 CONN. L. REV. 931, 944 (2008) (discussing view “that the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments embody a moral and constitutional duty to act affirmatively to disestablish the practices, institutional structures, and ideology of slavery and white supremacy”). But a discussion of those arguments is beyond the scope of this Article and my point here is more limited.
377 See, e.g., Carbado, supra note 33; Freeman, supra note 33. Such a victim-centered approach is certainly sufficiently present “in the American legal tradition” to count as a “reasonable” option for subnational actors to implement in Hills’s framework. Hills, supra note 373, at 950. For example, while not actually adopting a victim-centered view in his controlling Parents Involved opinion, Justice Kennedy still felt the need to explicitly address the reasonableness of such a view. See Parents Involved in Cnty. Schs. v. Seattle Sch. Dist. No. 1, 551 U.S. 701, 795 (2007) (Kennedy, J., concurring). Similarly, Justice Brennan’s concurrence for four Justices in Bakke relied upon a victim-centered perspective to justify greater discretion for state actors to engage in voluntary race-conscious equality initiatives than permitted by the strict scrutiny analysis of Justice Powell that eventually became the governing approach. See Regents of Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke, 438 U.S. 265, 368, 372 (1978) (opinion of Brennan, J.). For discussions of the historical pedigree of something like a victim-centered perspective, see generally, e.g., James Gray Pope, Section I of the Thirteenth Amendment and the Badges and Incidents of Slavery, 65 UCLA L. REV. 426 (2018); Mark A. Graber, The Second Freedmen‘s Bureau Bill’s Constitution, 94 TEX. L. REV. 1361 (2016).
378 Hills, supra note 373, at 949.
These considerations suggest that the objections by antibalkanization Justices that loosening the strictures imposed on remedial programs would force the judiciary to adjudicate “inherently unmeasurable claims of past wrongs”\(^{379}\) and create constantly shifting “judicial rankings” of who is entitled to preferential consideration (which “does not lie within the judicial competence”\(^{380}\)) are a red herring in the core territory of the approach. This territory does not involve issues in which the judiciary mandates that other government actors use race to remedy societal discrimination in a particular way.\(^{381}\) Rather, “questions of constitutional permission predominate.”\(^{382}\) In this context, the question for judicial review is whether the government has acted within the level of discretion that the nature of its activity entitles it to. Once one accepts the view that more discretion is appropriate, whether based explicitly on the persuasiveness of a structural view of racial inequality or based on a preference for decentralization of deep disagreements under Hills’s approach,\(^{383}\) the task of judicial review ceases to involve the treacherous enforcement of a highly precise boundary line.\(^{384}\) Instead, it becomes more one of keeping governmental actors inside a band of possibilities within which these difficult choices can be made through negotiation by the affected groups themselves.\(^{385}\) The judiciary’s lack of confidence in its own ability to make such choices should not prevent other actors from voluntarily protecting racial equality rights more strongly.\(^{386}\) Moreover, to the extent that remedial programs face difficult political obstacles due to the very racial hierarchy interests of Whites in what remains a majority-White nation,\(^{387}\) the fear that permitting greater discretion for such programs would lead to a “mosaic of shifting preferences”\(^{388}\) for “almost any . . . racial group with the political strength to negotiate ‘a piece of the action’”\(^{389}\) seems overblown.

With more discretion at their disposal, government actors who set out to remedy societal discrimination could act as the kind of “laboratories for experimentation to

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\(^{380}\) Bakke, 438 U.S. at 297.

\(^{381}\) See supra notes 44, 376 and accompanying text.

\(^{382}\) Siegel, supra note 14, at 1302 (emphasis added).

\(^{383}\) See supra notes 379–84 and accompanying text.

\(^{384}\) See supra note 381 and accompanying text.

\(^{385}\) Cf. Hills, supra note 373, at 981 (“Perhaps we will converge onto a common view. Until then, our willingness to let the other side have its share of policy-making space is a mark of our tolerance and respect for our fellow citizen.”).

\(^{386}\) See Joy Milligan, Religion and Race: On Duality and Entrenchment, 87 N.Y.U. L. REV. 393, 462–63 (2012) (“[C]onstraints on judicial enforcement should not stop other government actors from enforcing constitutional concerns more broadly[].”)

\(^{387}\) See Siegel, supra note 14, at 1353 (“The race-conscious civil rights laws that moderates strike down are often adopted by fragile coalitions negotiating under severe political constraints; once invalidated, the policies may never be reenacted or implemented in the form race moderates recommend or permit.”).


devise various solutions where the best solution is far from clear” that antibalkanization proponents have endorsed when such actors restrict race-conscious government action. As such laboratories, willing government actors could then more fully address the antibalkanization approach’s valid concerns about stereotyping, stigma, racial politics, division, and racial hostility and resentment. With respect to stereotyping, for example, research shows that reducing under-representation and segregation is often necessary to successfully counteract stereotypes. Similarly, while there is no easy way to avoid racial division, there are good reasons to think that more race-conscious engagement, not less, would help make people less susceptible to the power of divisive racial appeals over time. Such “policy innovations” should be given an opportunity to prove their potential for success and to perhaps even become “contagious.”

Importantly, working toward a more structural form of racial equality would also benefit White Americans in deep and important ways. As Angela Onwuachi-Willig has argued, our legal system’s approach to racial equality has always ignored that racial discrimination and a racial hierarchy grounded in White supremacy do not just harm people of color, but Whites as well. They have a dehumanizing effect on Whites by creating a false sense of racial superiority that underwrites a feeling of entitlement to racial privilege and justifies the mistreatment and neglect of those viewed as racially inferior. This sense of superiority “is particularly dangerous to a society that seeks racial equality” because it justifies a zero-sum view of racial equality based on which Whites feel “deprived of the material benefits and privileges that their ancestors had when Blacks were denied all privileges and rights by law.”


391 For a powerful narrative description of this point, see Forde-Mazrui, supra note 64, at 2379–81; see also Anderson, supra note 64, at 1270 (“Invidious racial stereotypes will be widespread as long as segregation and unconscious stereotype-based discrimination perpetuates the apparent evidential basis for them[].”); Boddie, supra note 121, at 781–82. Antibalkanization proponents have already found such reasoning persuasive in the context of university admissions programs that pursue the educational benefits of student body diversity. See supra Section I.D.

392 See, e.g., Haney López, supra note 3, at 226 (“The research is clear that colorblindness does not help us overcome racism; on the contrary, colorblindness as a strategy (rather than as a goal) forms part of the problem. . . . [A]verting one’s eyes to how race might be operating only makes one more susceptible to dog whistle manipulation.”).

393 Hills, supra note 373, at 980.


395 Id. at 360–62.

396 Id. at 361.
Thus, building a more lasting form of social cohesion and solidarity will require challenging this sense of superiority by working to dismantle “the very structures and institutions that work to perpetuate racial inequality.”

The urgency of the need for such a transformation in the Court’s approach is clear. The powerful social movement activity of groups like Black Lives Matter in response to the many racial tragedies that continue to haunt American society is succeeding at least in some places to shift the conversation from a focus on individual perpetrators to structural injustice. Based on the regressive current version of the antibalkanization approach, however, constitutional law is much more likely to deter or undermine any policy victories that might be won by such activism than to support them. The analysis in this Article suggests that this is not inevitable, even if the concerns raised by the antibalkanization approach are taken seriously. But it will take an adjustment to the Court’s basic assumptions about the nature of American race relations for things to change. If, but only if, a majority of the Court is willing to honestly question its baseline assumptions could the Court help turn the small progressive potential of the last few decades of its racial equality jurisprudence into progressive reality.

Given the recent changes in the composition of the Court, of course, it seems highly unlikely that the Court will actually do so in the near term. It is difficult to know whether there remain members in the conservative majority on the Court that may be willing to continue to apply even the “traditional” antibalkanization approach with all of its flaws. While long-standing efforts to put predictable partisans onto the Supreme Court have not fully succeeded in eliminating swing votes on the Court in cases with social justice dimensions, there are no clear indications that racial justice is a clear priority for occasional swing voters. Perhaps the best that one could expect, then, is that a combination of Justices who are comparatively willing to follow precedent and/or who are somewhat willing to learn and challenge their priors on race will vote to preserve the fragile status quo that permits some governmental

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397 Id.

398 For one example, see Vitolo v. Guzman, 999 F.3d 353, 360–62 (6th Cir. 2021), which issued a preliminary injunction against part of the federal coronavirus relief fund legislation because the legislation relied on race-conscious presumptions of social disadvantage in structuring access to relief funds, and the court believed that such presumptions could not be constitutionally justified by the government’s asserted compelling interest in remediating societal discrimination.

race-consciousness in higher education and redistricting as new challenges to these practices return to the Court.

If, as is perhaps more likely, the Court will pull back on race-consciousness instead, this Article hopes to have made at least a small contribution to the project of holding the Court accountable for its choices and planting the seeds for a more transformative jurisprudence in the future. In the hopes that over the long term the Court might become more receptive to rigorous analyses of complex and often ugly racial dynamics, it will be critical to have laid the groundwork. History provides many reasons to be pessimistic about the likelihood of such a future. But hope dies last, after all.

CONCLUSION

Recognition of the antibalkanization approach to equal protection has improved our understanding of the Supreme Court’s racial equality jurisprudence of the last four decades. Driven by the views of a small number of Justices in the middle of the Court, questions of “balkanization,” and in particular of social cohesion and racial hostility and resentment, have taken center stage. Antibalkanization Justices have developed a consistent jurisprudence around these questions and have based it on relevant racial equality concerns. But they have developed this jurisprudence from within a world that, while plausible, does not reflect the actual world of race relations in the United States. Their jurisprudence remains trapped in a perpetrator perspective that overlooks the crucial structural influence of racial hierarchy and White supremacy. Programs that aim to remedy the continuing effects of this hierarchy have been the approach’s primary victims. A more transformative jurisprudence requires incorporating a more realistic understanding of American race relations into legal doctrine and policymaking. A willingness to take these steps in the near future seems elusive and unlikely. But hope gains strength from the collective efforts of those demanding a more just future. And hope dies last. We shall see where it will be able to take us.