

The Threat of Progress

Clara Wilkins

Social Psychology Guest Lecture

October 13, 2011

Increasing Perception of Whites as Racial Victims

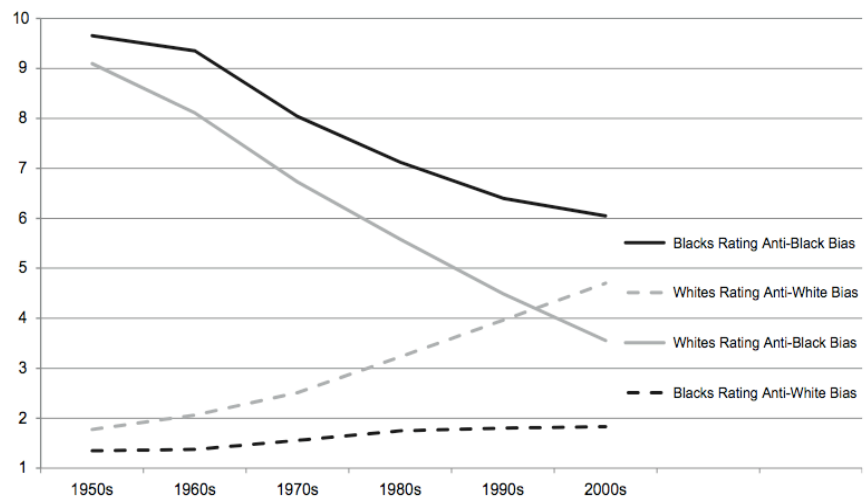
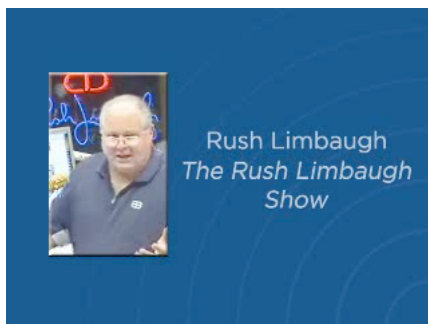


Fig. 1. White and Black respondents' perceptions of anti-White and anti-Black bias in each decade.

(Norton & Sommers, 2011)

When Do Whites Perceive Discrimination?

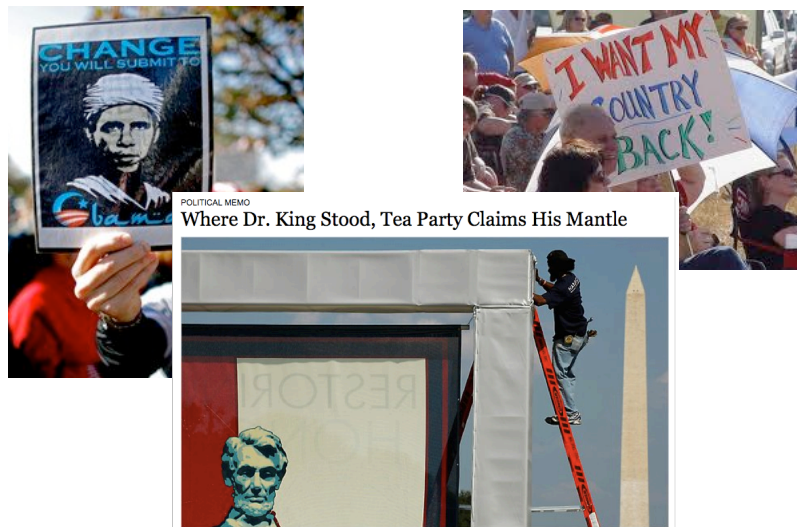
Evidence in the media



Evidence in the media



Increasing Perception of Whites as Racial Victims



Racial Progress

Racial minorities occupy positions traditionally held by Whites



Racial Progress Threatens Status
Hierarchy

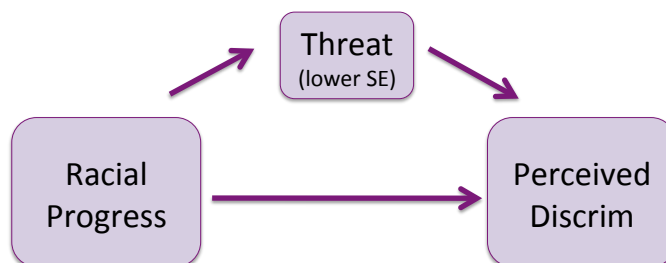
Racial Progress Threatens Status Hierarchy

- Pple motivated to rationalize existing social structures; see system as fair/ legit (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999)
- Feel threatened when status arrangements altered
- Threat to system = threat to self

SLB Endorsers Particularly Threatened by Racial Progress

- Status Legitimizing Beliefs (SLBs): beliefs that legitimize status inequality
- High SLB endorsers more threatened by race progress and perceive more discrimination than rejecters
 - White SLB endorsers more likely to attribute negative personal outcomes to discrimination (Major, Gramzow, McCoy, Levin, & Sidanius, 2002)

Model and Hypotheses



- Racial progress increases perceptions of anti- White discrimination (study 1 & 2)
- Racial progress threatening to Whites (study 3 & 4)
- SLB endorsement moderates experience of threat and perceptions of discrimination (study 3 & 4)

Study 1: Methods

- Participants N=113 Whites (50.4% female)
 - Mean age = 22.21 (SD =6.72)
- Procedure
 - Participants completed surveys
 - perceived racial progress
 - perceived discrimination

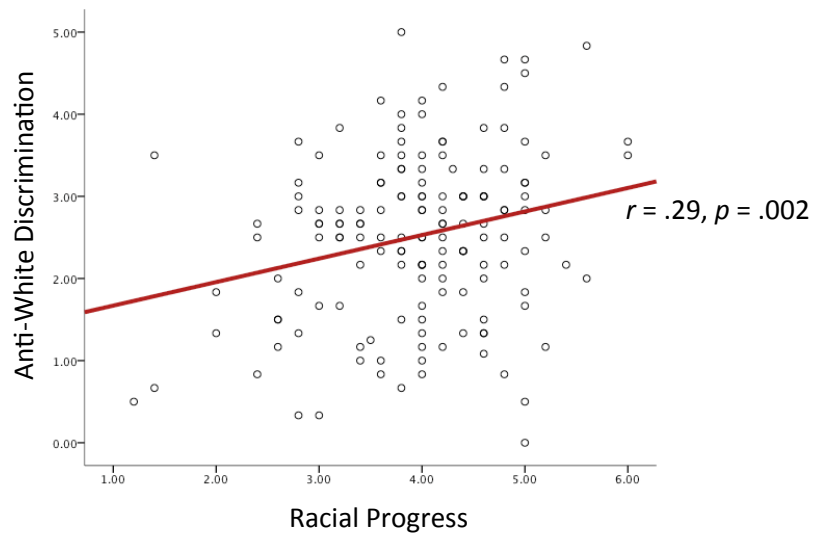
Measure: Perceptions of Racial Progress

- Blacks in the US are better off now (financially, politically etc.) than they ever have been.
- **In the last 50-70 years, great progress has been made towards racial equality in the United States.**
- There has been little improvement in conditions for Blacks in the US since the Civil Rights Movement. (R)
- The election of the first Black president shows that the US has made strides toward racial equality.
- **Racial minorities now occupy high status positions traditionally held by Whites.**

Measure: Perceptions of Discrimination

- Most powerful racial minorities do not like Whites.
- **Prejudice and discrimination against Whites in the US has increased in the last 10 years.**
- The status of White Americans has declined relative to other racial groups in the US over the last decade.
- Whites experience discrimination at the hands of Blacks.
- Whites experience discrimination from other Whites.
- Blacks and other racial groups benefit from preferential treatment that disadvantages Whites.
- Only racial minorities experience negative outcomes based on their race. (R)

Greater Racial Progress, Greater Anti-White Discrimination Perceptions

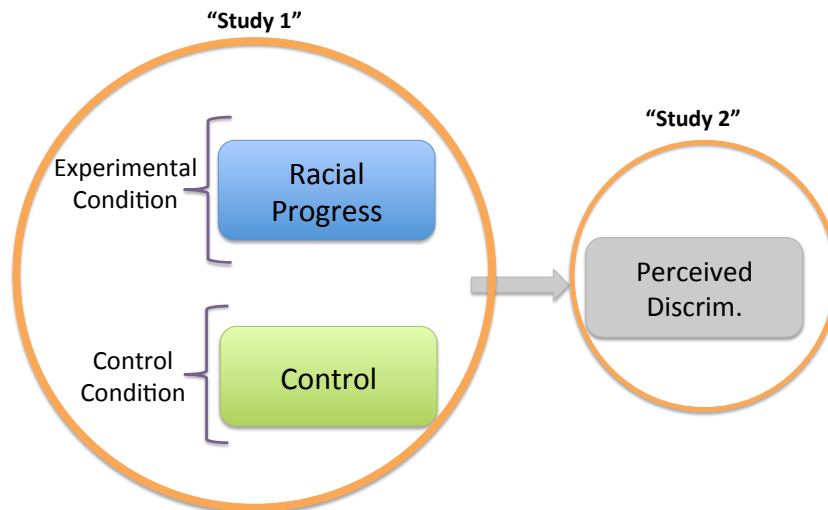


Study 2: Methods

Participants:

- N = 45 Whites (UW undergrads)
- 63% female
- Age: $M = 19.27, SD = 1.39$

Procedure:



Racial Progress

The Rise of Minorities in America

Published: October 21, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) - Although African Americans and other minorities have occupied a relatively low social position during much of this nation's history, **racial minorities have made tremendous social progress**. They have risen on all the standard markers of success: in terms of **occupational status, income and power**. During the last decade, in particular, African Americans and Latinos have gained access to some of the most coveted positions in the US. Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, **Sonia Sotomayor** and **Barack Obama** are notable examples of racial minorities who have occupied among the most powerful positions, not only in the US but also in the world.

These individuals are not simply exceptions; the social position of average racial minorities has also improved. College enrollment of Blacks, and Latinos has increase by 50% in the last 20 years (while enrolment of Whites has slightly declined). The annual income of minorities who graduate from college has also increased by more than 10% in the last decade (while the incomes of Whites has remained steady).

All of this suggests that Whites no longer occupy a position of privilege relative to other racial groups. Social analysts suggest that if recent trends continue, by 2020, race will no longer be a marker of social status in the US.

Control

Underdogs Snatch Another Surprise Victory

Published: October 21, 2009

WASHINGTON (AP) - Although the Jets are relative newcomers to the National Swimming League (NSL) competition – competing alongside longtime heavy weights of the tank – they have now surpassed all former forerunners leading up to the NSL competition.

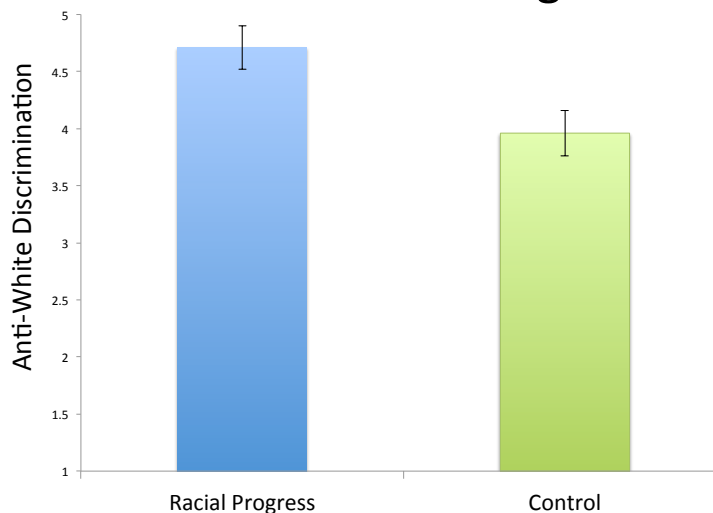
In this season's tryouts, the Jets out-performed team Torpedo (last year's NSL champion team) in the number of gold and silver medals picked up.

Surprisingly, the Jets have emerged from their underdog status and now claim prowess in the breaststroke, backstroke, and the butterfly. This is a rare feat, as most teams tend to excel in one stroke.

Recently media frenzy attests to the athletic superiority of the Jets over all other teams in the Northwest. They have been dubbed by *Sports Illustrated* "swimming's greatest success story," and have been described as "shaking up the swimming establishment." Swimming pundits anticipate that this winning streak will continue, leaving the door open for members of the Jets to outperform members of team Torpedo in qualifiers for the US national team, which is set to compete in the 2012 Olympics.

Kevin Smith, a renowned sports commentator, asks the provocative question, "Will swim team USA be the Jets?" So far, the answer seems to be, "most likely."

Anti-White Discrimination Perceptions Greater After Racial Progress Prime



Bars represent standard error
 $t(43) = 2.67, p = .01; d = .84$

Study 3: Methods

Participants:

- 109 Whites (UW undergrads)
- 49.5% female
- Age: $M = 19.31$, $SD = 1.02$

Additional Measures:

- Prescreening Status Legitimizing Beliefs (SLBs)
- Threat: implicit self esteem

SLB Measure

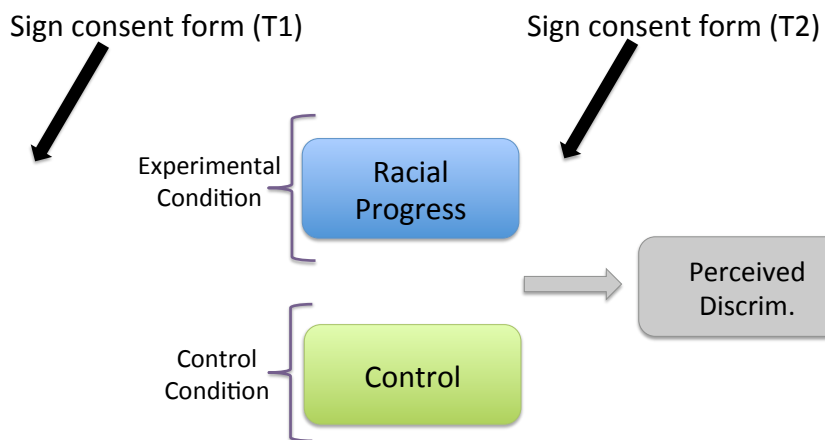
- **If people work hard they almost always get what they want**
- Most people who don't get ahead should not blame the system; they really have only themselves to blame
- In America, getting ahead doesn't always depend on hard work (R)
- Even if people work hard, they don't always get ahead (R)
- America is an open society where all individuals can achieve higher status
- **Advancement in American society is possible for all individuals**
- Individual members of certain groups have difficulty achieving higher status (R)
- Individual members of certain groups are often unable to advance in American society (R)
- America is a just society where differences in status between groups reflect actual group differences
- **Differences in status between groups in American society are fair**
- Differences in status between groups in American society are the result of injustice (R)
- It is unfair that certain groups in America have poorer living conditions than other groups

Implicit Self Esteem = Signature Size

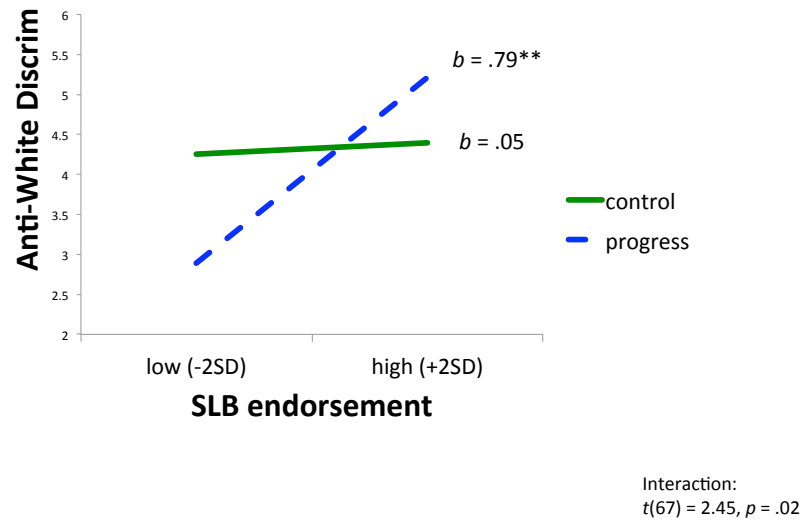
Clara Wilkins

•Signature size = area of rectangle: mm²
(Stapel & Blanton, 2004; Zweigenhaft, 1977)

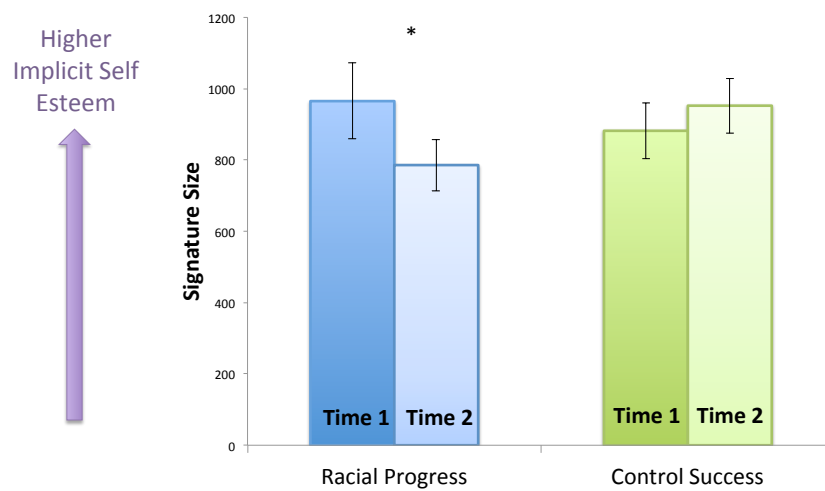
Procedure:



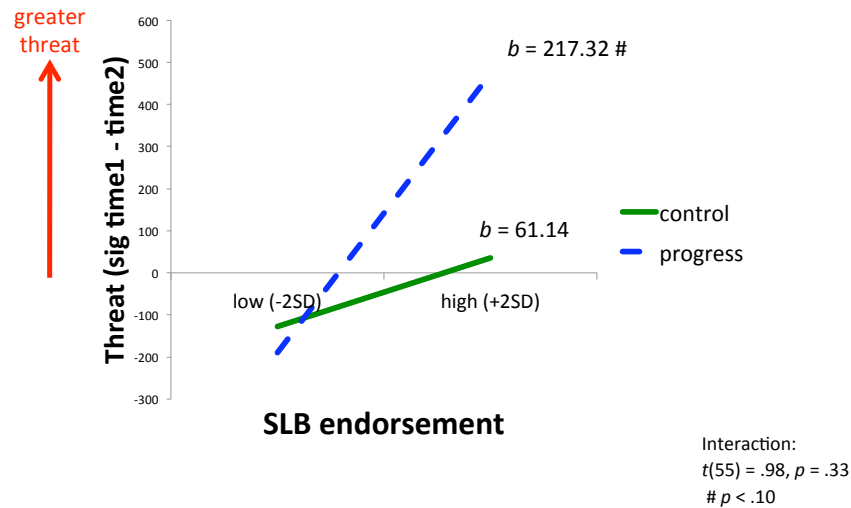
SLBs Positively Associated with Seeing Anti-White Discrimination after Racial Progress



Self Esteem Lower After Racial Progress



Racial Progress Causes Decrease in Implicit Self-Esteem



Self-Affirmation

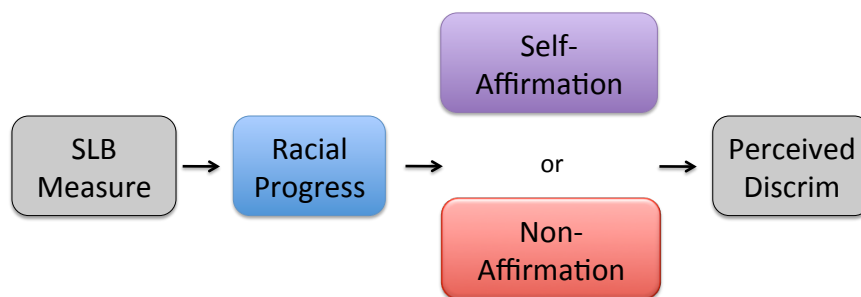
- People motivated to feel good about selves (Steele, 1988)
- When belief violated, motivated to restore self-worth
- Self-Affirmation buffers individuals from self-threats

Study 4: Methods

Participants:

- 71 Whites recruited online (Mturk)
- 66.2% female
- Age: $M = 33.89$, $SD = 13.2$

Procedure and Measures:



Self-Affirmation**Instructions**

Examine the following list of values and pick the one that you consider most important to you:

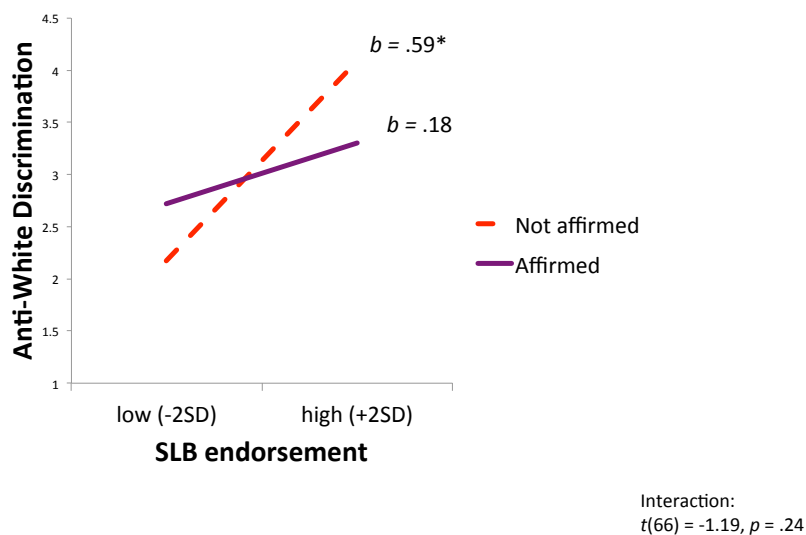
- a. Business/Economics*
- b. Art/Music/Theater*
- c. Social life/Relationships*
- d. Science/Pursuit of Knowledge*
- e. Politics/Civic Activities*
- f. Religion/Spirituality*
- g. Power/Fame*
- h. Honesty/Morality*
- i. Being Attractive*
- j. Humility*

Please write a few sentences about a time when your behavior exemplified your *most* important value. Please include a specific description of how your behavior demonstrated this value and how it made you feel about yourself.

Non-Affirmation**Instructions**

Please write, in detail, about what you ate during the day yesterday (from the time you woke up to the time you went to sleep).

Self-Affirmation Reduces SLB Effect on Perceptions Anti-White Discrimination



Summary

- Racial progress increases anti-White discrimination perceptions (study 1 & 2)
 - Particularly true for individuals who endorse the status hierarchy (study 3)
- Greater perceptions of discrimination appear to be a threat response (studies 3 & 4)

Implications of Race Progress

- Seen as less important to dedicate resources to racial minorities (Kaiser, Drury, Spalding, Cheryan, & O'Brien, 2009).
- Whites may be seen as needing extra help

The whites-only college scholarship

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Lloyd Grove – Tue Mar 1, 1:00 am ET

NEW YORK – Finally, help is on the way for America's downtrodden white males. Lloyd Grove reports on a controversial new college scholarship that targets a demographic not normally singled out for financial aid.

Finally—help is on the way for America's downtrodden white males, especially the ones who believe they've been shut out of all that financial aid that is apparently being ladled like gravy on non-Caucasian college kids.

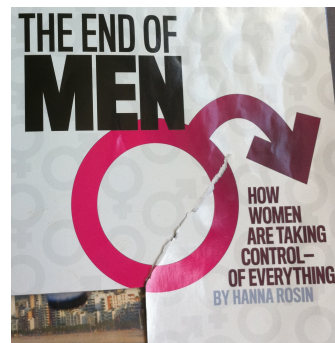
"It's about time," intones Texas State University business student William Lake, quoting an email he says was received the other day by the Former Majority Association for Equality, the scholarship fund he helped create to address this alleged injustice. "When we decided to start this scholarship, the conversation was primarily along the lines of 'There is something out there for almost any and every demographic, but we don't see anything out there for *this* demographic.' So we decided to go ahead and at least contribute toward a solution."

Lake, the nonprofit's 30-year-old finance director, explains: "Our qualifications are pretty simple. Basically, you have to be at least a 25 percent Caucasian male and have to have demonstrated a commitment to your education with at least a 3.0 grade average, demonstrate financial need, and show you're contributing positively to your community."

Current and Future Directions

- For Whites does the act of claiming discrimination raise self esteem?
- How do people react to anti-White discrimination claims?
- Is social progress threatening to other groups?

Is social progress threatening to other groups?



[gender progress](#)

Questions?