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### **Racialized Thought Patterns and Public Opinion on American Health Care Reform**

The American health care reform initiatives of 2010 provide a unique opportunity to study the effects of racialized thought patterns on public opinion formation. Not only does this legislation promise to reduce dire discrepancies in health conditions between blacks and whites; it is also a major accomplishment of America’s first black President. And while observational and experimental studies have already suggested that racial prejudice causes opposition to health care reform, we don’t know much about the specifics of this relationship.

I employ a survey-embedded experiment to test the hypotheses that racialized thought patterns diminish support for health care reform among whites, and that “colorblind” racial attitudes are employed by opponents to legitimize this diminished support. Experimental results indicate that white subjects react more negatively to health care legislation when the policymaker proposing the plan is black. The magnitude of this effect is modest overall, but is very large among wealthier, politically moderate whites. At the same time, exposure to a black governor predicts increases in colorblind racial attitudes and racial resentment among white subjects. Finally, exposure to imagery of black beneficiaries of the plan predicts a decrease in reported support for President Obama among whites. These results provide preliminary evidence that public opinion on American health care reform is subject to racial attitudes, and that attitudes surrounding the race of the policymaker are especially salient.