Objective vs. Subjective Context:

Questions about the Mechanism Linking Racial Context to Political Attitudes

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Abstract:

According to theories of power threat, the more blacks that live in an area, the more whites fear economic and political competition, and the greater the potential for racial discrimination. Most research about racial context assumes that individuals are aware of their surroundings, and such studies use Census numbers to predict attitudes and behaviors. I argue that assumptions that individuals accurately perceive the racial characteristics of their environment are incorrect. I compare the effects of objective and subjective context on racial attitudes and policy preferences and find that perceptions of context have no impact. My findings raise important questions about the "threat" mechanism and the interpretation of past research on racial context and racial attitudes.

Over the past half century, much social science research has focused on understanding how individuals' geographic contexts influence their racial attitudes, policy opinions, and voting behavior. Key's research on Black Belts in the South was an early contribution to this research area (1949), and scholars since have concentrated on examining the effects of a community's demography on its residents' beliefs and fears. For example, according to a simple version of the "power threat hypothesis," the more African Americans that live in a geographic area, the more likely whites in that locale will feel threatened and support racially discriminatory policies or candidates (Blalock 1967). Conversely, theories about social contact hypothesize that, under certain circumstances, greater interaction between individuals of different races will lead to greater understanding and racial harmony (Amir 1969; Pettigrew 1998).

Almost all of the previous research on the effects of individuals' surroundings assumes that individuals perceive their contexts and subsequently change their attitudes and actions. However, the measures of racial context that researchers use are objective numbers from Census data, not the subjective perceptions of respondents themselves. The assumption that Census numbers are a good proxy for people's perceptions has never been tested. The untried nature of this assumption is cause for concern, because previous research has indicated that Americans' perceptions of politics are far from accurate: the American public's level of political information is low, and their knowledge of current events is not always up to date (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). Ordinary citizens also have difficulty grasping statistical concepts, and they often reach incorrect conclusions using personal experiences, recent, salient events, or other heuristics as guides for decisionmaking (Ross 1977; Tversky and Kahneman 1974).

Scholars also have shown that individuals' misperceptions influence policy preferences. For example, Americans who overestimate the numbers of poor blacks in the U.S. are more likely to oppose welfare programs (Gilens 1999), and ignorance about political facts more generally affects

policy decisions (Gilens 2001; Hochschild 2001). Voters who were more supportive of Bush in the 2004 election were also more likely to believe that Iraq had Weapons of Mass Destruction and had supported Al Qaeda (Kull 2004). Furthermore, scholars studying the relationships between voters' pocketbooks, economic conditions, and voting find that perceptions of the state of the economy can differ from the true statistics, and that the former can be more important than the latter in influencing vote choices (Hetherington 1996; Kramer 1983; Kinder and Kiewiet 1981; Kinder, Adams, Gronke 1989; Mutz 1998).

In this article, I examine how perceptions about racial context affect political opinions, bringing together research on the political effects of knowledge, individual assessments about facts—like the state of the economy—and research on racial threat. Do Census numbers and subjective perceptions of racial context influence racial attitudes and policy preferences in the same way? If the pictures of America that citizens have in their heads do not match up to the numbers reported in the Census, and if they have differing effects on political opinions, what, in fact, are scholars measuring when they find that the percentage of blacks living in a county is related to negative racial attitudes? The *analyses* of a half century of research on racial threat may be unaffected, but the *interpretations* of the results would have to change drastically. For example, one possible reinterpretation is that an altogether different mechanism is at work: political elites could serve to link Census data to citizens' policy preferences, via messages framed to emphasize threats posed by outgroups. In this scenario, the communication of demographic facts is not a necessary part of getting the messages across to constituents. It is not the purpose of this article, however, to develop, propose, or test a new theory of how geography affects attitudes. It will be enough to show that what people perceive is not what the Census reports, and to be clear about how this disjuncture between subjective and objective context raises serious questions about how we should understand and interpret the large body of past research on this topic.

In *Public Opinion*, Lippmann (1922) writes the following:

> The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind….Yet [man] has invented ways of seeing what no naked eye could see, of hearing what no ear could hear, of weighing immense masses and infinitesimal ones, of counting and separating more items than he can individually remember. He is learning to see with his mind vast portions of the world that he could never see, touch, smell, hear, or remember. Gradually he makes for himself a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world beyond his reach (18).

I ask if this picture is indeed so trustworthy when it comes to race, and raise questions about what happens to theories of racial context if it is not.

RACIAL CONTEXT, THREAT, AND PREJUDICE

In *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, Key showed that counties with the highest percentages of black populations tended also to be places with the highest rates of voting by whites (1949). Whites in the Black Belt—who should have been most invested in maintaining control over the black population and most afraid of losing that control—presumably felt and reacted to their feelings of economic and political threat from African Americans with increased political participation. While Key acknowledged that the Black Belts constituted only a small proportion of the South, he also argued the following:

> …if the politics of the South revolves around any single theme, it is that of the role of the black belts. Although the whites of the black belts are few in number, their unity and their political skill have enabled them to run a shoestring into a decisive power at critical junctures in southern political history (Key 1949, 5-6).

This positive relationship between the percentage of blacks (or other minorities) living in communities and discriminatory attitudes by whites has been reconfirmed and replicated over time and space since that time (Blalock 1967; Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Giles 1977; Giles and Evans 1985; Glaser 1994; Quillian 1996; Stein et al. 2000; Taylor 1998, 2000). Racial context also affects political behavior as well, with larger populations of African Americans and Latinos leading to greater white voter registration, voting for anti-immigrant initiatives, voting for Republican

candidates, and opposition to black leaders like Jesse Jackson (Giles and Buckner 1993; Heer 1959; Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989; Key 1949; Prysby 1989; Tolbert and Hero 1996, 2001; Wright 1977). Quillian has applied this research to the changing demographics of the European Union, using the percentage of non-EEC immigrants to predict anti-immigrant and racial prejudice (1995). The variation in these dependent variables are all hypothesized results of the racial and ethnic competition and conflict that whites ought to feel in response to living among greater numbers of minorities: the larger the numbers, the more political and economic threat perceived.

Context has not been measured solely in terms of race and ethnicity. Scholars have also focused on the contextual effects of the economy, fiscal spending, partisanship, education, and the black-to-white ratios of male employment rates and family income (see, for examples, Campbell et al. N.d.; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Quillian 1995; and Taylor 2000). The assumption about the mechanism in these studies is often identical to that assumed by studies of the racial characteristics of one's surroundings: individuals will observe qualities of their locales, and such observations will affect their opinions and actions.[1]

For the research cited above, "racial threat" has been operationalized as the percentage black or outgroup in the designated geographic unit in which a white individual lives. In Figure 1, which is a schematic version of Blalock's power threat theory, the dotted lines represent a replication of his Figure 9 (1967, p.29). The percent nonwhite in a locale leads to the motivation to discriminate (and, subsequently, to discriminatory behavior and racial inequalities) *via* "fear of competition" and "fear

[1] Of course, other less direct mechanisms are possible with some types of context. As Oliver and Mendelberg (2000) note, low contextual SES may be related to exposure to more crime and disorder, so the objective SES context measure may serve as a proxy for exposure to and knowledge of crime.

of power threat."[2] The solid line that directly connects "percent nonwhite" to "motivation to discriminate" is not in Blalock's original figure. I have added it here to represent what past research has actually tested, and what much past research has interpreted as a positive relationship between "threat" and anti-minority attitudes and behaviors among members of a majority group. What is missing from the figure, I argue, are people's perceptions of their environment, which should precede both "fear of competition" and "fear of power threat."

The theory, as depicted by Blalock, assumes that "context" must be (1) accurately perceived by the individual and (2) understood to be a threat. Quillian (1996), for example, explains that

> The most frequent interpretation of these results is that percentage black increases prejudice or discrimination because the proportion black is related to degree of threat Whites feel from Blacks. Like past studies, I include percentage black as a group-level cause of prejudice and accept the interpretation that percentage black increases racial hostility because it is related to perceived threat African-Americans pose to Whites (821).

He adds the following footnote: "As far as I am aware, group threat is the only explanation in the literature of why percentage black should influence white racial attitudes" (821, note 5). Kinder and Sanders (1996) also point out this assumption, writing, "…we cannot know for certain whether, say, whites in the black belt in fact felt threatened by large black populations" (82). Obviously, if perceptions have a similar relationship to racial attitudes and behavior as do objective measures, then there is little worry; in that case, Census numbers could serve as good proxies for people's perceptions, saving money and time for a survey researcher. The comparisons provided in the analyses that follow, however, indicate that Census numbers cannot serve as such proxies.[3] And, if

[2] Blalock notes that even if these intervening variables cannot be measured adequately, "…a careful micro-level analysis of psychological factors may suggest modifications in the theory (1967, p. 29)."

[3] To my knowledge, the only other examples of research that examine both perceptions of racial context and objective measures of racial density are in the area of criminology (see Chiricos et al.

ordinary Americans do not see their contexts, it is difficult, if not impossible, to assume that the percentages of blacks living nearby white individuals then can lead directly to feelings of threat or competition.

Another question about the interpretation of results using Census numbers arises because studies of racial context produce results that do not coincide with those of work on the contact hypothesis (Allport 1954). Racial proximity — measured as the reported presence of blacks in whites' neighborhoods, churches and workplaces or as reported contact — diminishes the impact of prejudice on racial policy opinions (Kinder and Mendelberg 1995; Sigelman and Welch 1993). Furthermore, the racial context of one's neighborhood is an important determinant of social interaction opportunities between whites and blacks (Huckfeldt 1986; Welch et al. 2001). How can these results be reconciled with findings that show that as the percentage of blacks in a locality rises, the greater the racial animosity? Allport, in his volume on prejudice, reported on a 1950 study by Kramer in Chicago, which found that the closer whites lived to blacks, the less stereotypical views they had, but the greater their worries about social intermixing of children and intermarriage (1954, 258). Stein et al. (2000) also address the overlap of context and contact; they examine Anglos' attitudes about Latinos in Texas and find that objective context (measured as percentage of Latinos in a respondent's county) affects individuals' levels of interracial/ interethnic contact. So, while increasing numbers of Hispanics may lead to more negative racial attitudes among Anglos, they also

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1997; Chiricos et al. 2001; Matei et al 2001; Sampson et al 2002). For example, Chiricos et al. (2001) find that objective racial composition at the Census-block level has no effect on fear of crime, while perceptions of more blacks and Hispanics in the neighborhood do lead to greater fear among whites in some areas. The authors conclude that using perceptions of neighborhood composition is the better measure; but, they neither discuss why objective and subjective measures of context are dissimilar, nor what effects their disparate findings have on the body of work on "racial threat."

provide the opportunities for positive effects of interethnic contact. In order to understand better the links between context, contact, perceived context, and threat, researchers need to ask if racial proximity — as measured by contact — is different from racial context — as measured by Census numbers or individuals' estimates — and in what ways.

Some scholars have also questioned the peculiar aggregate-level operationalization of threat, and have tried to measure the perception of threat at the individual level (see, for example, Bowers 1998).[4] Bowers argues that the translation from percentage nonwhite in an individual's community to the motivation to discriminate (and subsequently to discriminatory behavior and inequalities)—via a perception of potential harm or threat—has been modeled without ever being measured directly (1998). As mentioned earlier, Blalock (1967) proposed two intermediary factors of "fear of competition" and "fear of power threat," but these hypotheses have not been assessed empirically very effectively. For example, Taylor (1998) uses items asking about job and political competition with blacks as mediating "threat" variables, and finds that the percentage of blacks living in a locality has a direct effect on whites' political attitudes even after controlling for these factors. Her measures of "threat" do not tap perceptions of individual-level threat to whites, though—asking, for example, whether *whites* often lose jobs or promotions to equally or less qualified blacks, not whether the white respondent thinks that he or she *personally* may lose a job or promotion. Therefore, one reason "threat" failed to act as a mediating variable in her study may be a result of survey questions that are inadequate to capture the concept. It is also possible that the percentage of African Americans living in a locality could be a measure of an altogether different concept in the minds of

[4] Another obvious (and perhaps more common) perception of threat is that felt by *minority* group members. For example, Green and Waxman (1987) examine the tolerance of African Americans for racists, compared to other groups in society. However, the "racial threat" literature focuses on whites' reactions to perceived threats posed by minority groups, so I focus on that case here.

whites than threat, such as a desire for diversity. Irrespective of whether increasing numbers of blacks in an area are interpreted as a positive or negative phenomenon in the minds of ordinary white Americans, the assumption required for either interpretation is that the numbers are actually being observed.

THE MECHANISM LINKING CONTEXT TO POLITICS

The abovementioned research leaves us with a large body of work that shows relatively consistent relationships, but which makes strong assumptions about the "missing links" drawn as dotted lines in Figure 1. In between "percent white" and "fear of competition" and "fear of power threat," another variable called "perceptions" is obviously needed. It is hard to imagine how individuals feel threatened by what is happening nearby if those individuals do not perceive it. Ignorance, in this case, ought to lead to bliss, not fear.

How reasonable are Blalock's assumptions that (1) individuals perceive their context correctly, and that (2) individuals interpret these perceptions as politically threatening? Researchers have shown that a majority of Americans have inaccurate perceptions of the racial demography of the country, overestimating the percentages of minority groups in the U.S.—including blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Jews—and underestimating the percentage of whites (Wong 2005; Gladwell 1995; Highton and Wolfinger 1992; Nadeau et al. 1993; Sigelman and Niemi 2001).[5] Much like political information, these estimates become more accurate with higher socioeconomic status; furthermore, the *perceived* sizes of the racial/ethnic groups in respondents' "local communities" affect the accuracy of these perceptions at the national level, while the *objective* local contexts have a smaller effect, if at all (Wong 2005). In other words, Census numbers are not good proxies for people's

[5] For example, on average, respondents to the 2000 General Social Survey estimated that the nation was 31% black, while the actual number from the U.S. Census in 2000 was 12%.

perceptions of the size of local racial/ethnic groups, at least in predicting factual information about the nation's demography.

This finding leads to questions about the second assumption: do (mis)perceptions of racial context also lead to feelings of threat? Is the effect of subjective context (measured as perceptions of one's racial context) similar to the effect of objective context (measured as the percentage of a minority group as reported by the Census) in predicting feelings of racial prejudice or negative attitudes about racial policies? In order to answer these questions, I compare the effects of objective context and subjective perceptions on the same set of attitudinal variables. If they have similar effects (i.e., coefficients of relatively equal size, in the same direction) on racial attitudes and policy preferences, then Census figures can serve as proxies for individuals' perceptions. However, if respondents' perceptions of their local community do not have similar effects as objective contextual numbers, then we need to rethink our interpretations of the previous research that finds a positive relationship between percent black in a locale and whites' political attitudes and actions.[6]

In order to compare people's perceptions with their objective contexts, I need a dataset for which both are available; I need to know where they live and what they perceive about where they live. A survey is ideal because multiple respondents can be asked to describe the racial make-up of their local communities, and they can also be located geographically. In order to compare the

[6] One plausible alternative is that local political leaders and media elites may serve as ordinary citizens' "eyes" and translate the surrounding area's demography into politics, without the average individual "seeing" his or her surroundings. A political candidate, for example, could prime white voters to worry about interracial conflict in a zero-sum game without ever mentioning Census reports or projections. Testing this type of alternative is beyond the scope of this paper, which focuses on whether the political effects of respondents' perceptions of their context resemble the effects of objective context. I speculate more about alternative mechanisms in the conclusion.

political effects of objective and subjective contexts, the survey must also include questions about racial attitudes and policy preferences. Ideally, I would be able to replicate the results found by other scholars of racial context—using Census numbers for a local area—while comparing whether perceptions of those same locales led to similar outcomes.[7] Luckily, this scenario is not far beyond the realm of possibility.

DATA: Measures of Context, Objective and Perceived

The data for my analyses are drawn from the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS), which provides the best data to compare the political consequences of objective and subjective context (Davis et al. 2000). The 2000 GSS is part of the biannual series of in-person national surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) since 1972. The 2000 GSS contains a module on the Multi-Ethnic United States (MEUS),[8] and 967 non-Hispanic white respondents were

[7] This comparison is only as direct as is currently possible. In a perfect comparison, the unit of analysis would be identical (and made explicit to the respondents) for the objective and subjective measures of context. For example, in their criminology study of a county in Florida, Chiricos et al. (1997) matched Census data at the block level with a survey question asking respondents to estimate the racial composition of the neighborhood they lived in, defining a neighborhood in the question wording as people living within a mile of the respondent's house. However, even in their case, the authors note that given population density, a Census block may be larger or smaller than a mile square. Furthermore, for the purposes of this article, their dataset would not be appropriate, given the lack of variables focusing on racial attitudes and policy preferences.

[8] For an excellent description of the MEUS items, their frequencies, and comparisons of responses by basic demographic groups, see Smith 2001.

asked the MEUS items.[9] As part of the module, respondents were asked the following question: "Just your best guess—what percentage of the people who live in your local community is each group?" The groups listed included whites, blacks/African-Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and American Indians. The instructions to the interviewers explained that the percentages did not have to add to 100% and that the listed groups were not mutually exclusive, consistent with the measurement of race and ethnicity in the Census. The question was used to measure respondents' perceptions of their context.

Because I wanted to be able to examine whether respondents' surroundings—actual and perceived—had any effects on their political attitudes, I needed data on their "local communities." Upon request by the author, NORC provided identifiers for the 100 Primary Sampling Units (PSUs) from which the sample was drawn, and this individual-level dataset was then linked with 2000 Census data for these PSUs.[10] As a result, for each individual respondent, there is information on the demographic breakdown of the PSU in which she lives, including percent black.

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[9] The models in this section all use non-Hispanic white respondents only. Although it is important to understand the implications of living in diverse areas for *all* Americans, in order to gain a better understanding of what racial context means or does, we must first start with a single group and its reactions to the presence of outgroups, real or imagined. Plus, the "power threat" theory is explicitly about majority groups, as the title of Blalock's book states, so I focus here on non-Hispanic whites.

[10] The 2000 sample was drawn from NORC's 1990 sampling frame of 100 PSUs. Because some of the PSUs are Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) that changed between 1990 and 2000, the 2000 Census data used are the aggregated data for the counties associated with each PSU. According to NORC, all respondents are drawn from these counties. In other words, all

While PSU is not a perfect match for a respondent's "local community," it can serve as a localized point of comparison for an individual's context. More importantly, it is the *best data currently available* that has geographic identifiers for respondents who answered a rich battery of questions about their perceptions of their communities, racial attitudes, and policy opinions. It is also not clear what an ideal geographic match for "local community" would be for these data. No clear definition of "community" is given to GSS respondents, nor is there a consensus in the academic literature about what "community" means to the American public.[11] In the Social Capital

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respondents in the Atlanta MSA, for example, were drawn from 18 counties in Georgia. This decision to use aggregated county data for each PSU ensures that 2000 Census data can be linked to survey data gathered in the same year for these analyses. Furthermore, I chose to use 2000 Census data rather than that of 1990 because of the potentially large demographic changes that have occurred in locales during that decade. Finally, I am using the PSU (i.e., aggregated county data) as the contextual unit of analysis because it is the *only* geographic unit available for these data, not because I am convinced that it is the optimal contextual unit. The GSS does not release geographic identifiers for smaller units of analysis (e.g., the city in which a respondent resides), even with special requests and confidentiality agreements. As it turns out, *over half of the PSUs analyzed here are composed of only a single county*. The PSUs vary a great deal in population size, with a median of 440,000 people (about the size of Atlanta) and a mean of 1.48 million people (about the size of Philadelphia). In other words, half of the PSUs were smaller than Atlanta. The PSUs also vary a great deal in terms of diversity: they range from 0 to 57% Hispanic, 40 to 99% white, 0 to 58% black, 0 to 20% Asian, and 0 to 30% American Indian.

[11] For examples, Fernandez and Dillman (1979) define community as the town or city in or near where one resides, shops, and receives services, and the rural area around it; Allensworth and Rochin (1998) refer to Census "places" as communities, where "places" are densely settled concentrations of

Community Benchmark Survey (Putnam 2000), almost 80 percent of the national sample said that living in their city gave them "a sense of community or a feeling of belonging"; while one's "community" may not always give one a "sense of community," this finding indicates that metropolitan area is not an unsuitable match for "local community" even if it is not perfect.

One might hypothesize that "local community" represents a much smaller geographic area, like a respondent's neighborhood. GSS data are able to address this possibility to a certain extent. The 2000 GSS has a question asking respondents about whether there are any blacks living in their "neighborhood" now. Among those who answer "no", the mean and median percentages of blacks perceived in their "local community" are 5% and 13%, respectively. In other words, from respondents' own descriptions of their "neighborhoods" and "local communities," it appears that individuals are not equating these geographic units.[12]

Given the ambiguity about exactly what geographic entity is in the heads of respondents as they answer questions about their "local community," I proceed in these analyses to use Census data on the smallest geographic unit that the GSS releases to represent "objective" characteristics of a respondent's "local community," while being sensitive to problems in equating them. While PSU is not the ideal contextual unit for capturing *political* threat—compared to electoral district, for example—it can serve as an excellent measure of where individuals live, work and play.[13] After all, it

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population that are identifiable by name but are not legally incorporated; and Munch and Campbell (1963) argue that a community is based on collective identification, not objective bases.

[12] The respondents who say that there are no blacks in their neighborhood are not odd outliers: they make up almost a third of the sample.

[13] Scholars disagree about what the most appropriate geographic unit of analysis is, including options like neighborhood, county, SMSA, state, or country; others argue that the electoral district may be the more appropriate unit of analysis (see, for example, Liu 2001), particularly if "threat" is

is unlikely that respondents live and work in the same census tract, and economic competition (and media stories about that competition) covers a broader area than a ward or district (Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). Furthermore, using the GSS's PSU-level racial demographic measures, Taylor (1998) finds evidence of contextual effects, so the analyses that follow should also find similar effects for objective context for the same geographic unit if her findings are robust across years.

Other Individual- and PSU-level Traits

A number of factors may affect both perceptions of context as well as political and racial attitudes. To guard against confounds, therefore, I add a number of controls to the models estimated in the next section. I include the following as individual-level and macro-level covariates: education, income, occupational prestige, employment status, sex, age, the natural log of the total population of the locality, and a regional control for the South. Given previous research, there is reason to believe that lower socioeconomic status (including one's employment status and the type of job one has) leads a white respondent to perceive greater threat from blacks (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Burr et al. 1991; Wilcox and Roof 1978), that Southerners react to race in different ways than non-Southerners (Glaser 1994; Glaser and Gilens 1997; Key 1949), and that older respondents may be more racially conservative (Schuman et al. 1997). Taylor explains that a control for the population size of a locality is needed because "…it may suppress the effect of percent black" (1998, 519); furthermore, Frug (1999) has argued that individuals who choose to live in densely-populated areas

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to be seen in the arena of political competition. Districts and cities, rather than zip codes and metropolitan areas, for example, bound elections in much of the country. Nevertheless, past positive findings about the effects of racial context have been based on measures at varying levels—usually determined by data availability.

like cities are more comfortable with diversity than residents of more sparsely-populated locations. The research on political awareness and information also indicate that higher levels of education and income are associated with greater knowledge. Gender is also a factor, such that women tend to have less political information than men.[14]

Racial Attitudes

In order to determine whether objective and subjective context have similar political effects, I need to examine their impact on racial prejudice and policy preferences. The 2000 GSS has questions about a range of racial and political attitudes. Although they are not measures of vote choices or discriminatory actions, they do capture some of the important precursors of political behaviors—Blalock's "motivation to discriminate." I group them into three rough categories of prejudice and social distance, attitudes about helping blacks, and attitudes about the relations between whites and blacks in society.

Anti-Black Prejudice and Social Distance. To capture whites' anti-black prejudice, I estimate models predicting measures of stereotyping and attitudes about interracial contact. The stereotyping index is the sum of the differences in respondents' opinions about whites and blacks for six characteristics: intelligence, wealth, proneness to violence, work orientation, commitment to

[14] I also tested a number of other potential confounds, including exposure to television and newspapers, contact with black neighbors, and contact with black co-workers. However, they did not affect the substantive conclusions, so for the sake of simplicity and because the main focus of the paper is the contrast between objective and subjective context, I leave them out of the models presented and address them only in the conclusion.

families, and commitment to equality of treatment (See Appendix for question wordings.).[15] High scores indicate beliefs that blacks are less intelligent, less wealthy, more violent, lazier, and less committed to family and equality than whites. Respondents were also asked about their opinions about interracial marriage of a close friend or relative, anti-miscegenation laws, and whether they were willing to live in a neighborhood that is half black. High scores for both the marriage and neighborhood questions indicate a desire for greater distance from African Americans.

Opposition to Policies and Practices to Benefit African Americans. To measure attitudes about policies and practices aimed to benefit blacks, four dependent variables are analyzed. "Government Helping Blacks" is an index of three items: respondents' attitudes about the government's obligation to help blacks and two different assessments of spending by the federal government for "assistance to blacks" or "improving the condition of blacks." Respondents in the GSS sample were also asked about their attitudes about affirmative action, whether blacks should overcome prejudice without any "special favors," and whether blacks should "push themselves where they're not wanted." High scores indicate opposition to these practices or policies.

Attitudes about relations between whites and blacks in society. Finally, to capture more general attitudes about the relative positions of whites and blacks, I predicted attitudes about "victim blame" and "system blame"—different explanations for why blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than whites in society. I also analyzed a single item asking about the likelihood that a white person will lose a job or promotion to a black person were analyzed. High scores indicate that African Americans are responsible for their inferior position in society, and that it is likely that a white person will lose out to a black person in the workplace.

[15] The difference in respondents' scores for Whites and Blacks is used to control for method effects and individual differences in the use of scales to evaluate social groups (Wilcox et al. 1989).

For variables measuring aspects of traditional anti-black prejudice, policy preferences, and race relations, Taylor (1998) finds that racial context matters, using similar questions in the 1996 GSS: the greater the percentage of blacks living in a respondent's PSU, the greater the anti-black prejudice and the stronger the belief that blacks are to blame for their inferior position in society. I now turn to see if the 2000 GSS yields similar results for objective and subjective context. Does a white respondent who lives among more African Americans feel greater anti-black prejudice, for example, than another who lives among few blacks? And, does a white respondent who *thinks* she lives among many African Americans express greater opposition to policies aimed at helping blacks than a compatriot who *thinks* she lives only among other whites?

Models

I estimated three different multilevel models with random intercepts and random slopes for each dependent variable because I am interested in examining the effects of both macro-level (PSU) and micro-level (individual) units on the dependent variables (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002; Snijders and Bosker 1999).[16] The first is the "objective context" model, which is the standard threat model predicting racial and policy attitudes; the second is the "subjective context" model, using respondents' perceptions of their local communities as the measure for context; and the third, "full model" incorporates both objective and subjective measures of context.[17]

[16] These models were estimated using a package for multilevel analysis written by Jose' Pinheiro and Douglas Bates for use in Splus and R. In this package, as in most others, the random intercepts and slopes are assumed to be multivariate normally distributed.

[17] The correlation between %black in the PSU reported by the Census and %black perceived in the local community is .29 for non-Hispanic White respondents.

Y_{ij} represents the dependent variable of interest for person *i* in PSU *j*. The following equation represents the individual-level part of the "objective context" model:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_1(\text{education})_{ij} + \beta_2(\text{occupational prestige})_{ij} + \beta_3(\text{employment status})_{ij} + \beta_4(\text{gender})_{ij} + \beta_5(\text{age})_{ij} + \beta_6(\text{income})_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

where r_{ij} is the individual-level error term and β_{0j} is the PSU-level intercept.

At the macro-level, the effects for each PSU are measured by the set of β:

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\%\text{black in PSU})_j + \gamma_{02}(\text{South})_j + \gamma_{03}(\ln \text{PSU population size})_j + u_{0j.}$$

In other words, the PSU-level intercept may be affected by the racial context of the PSU, if the PSU is located in the South, and by its population size.

The following equations are for the "subjective context" model:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(\text{perceived \%group in community})_{ij} + \beta_2(\text{education})_{ij} + \beta_3(\text{occupational prestige})_{ij} + \beta_4(\text{employment status})_{ij} + \beta_5(\text{gender})_{ij} + \beta_6(\text{age})_{ij} + \beta_7(\text{income})_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\text{South})_j + \gamma_{02}(\ln \text{PSU population size})_j + u_{0j,}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + u_{1j},$$

And the "full model" is represented by the following:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}(\text{perceived \%group in community})_{ij} + \beta_2(\text{education})_{ij} + \beta_3(\text{occupational prestige})_{ij} + \beta_4(\text{employment status})_{ij} + \beta_5(\text{gender})_{ij} + \beta_6(\text{age})_{ij} + \beta_7(\text{income})_{ij} + r_{ij}$$

$$\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(\%\text{black in PSU})_j + \gamma_{02}(\text{South})_j + \gamma_{03}(\ln \text{PSU population size})_j + u_{0j,}$$

$$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + u_{1j},$$

The effect of *perceived %group in community* on the dependent variable may vary by PSU.[18] All variables in the models to follow have been recoded 0 to 1.[19]

[18] The models were also rerun, with β_{1j} affected by *%black in PSU*. The rationale is that the effect of people's perceptions of their community on *Y* may vary by the objective racial context of their PSU.

Effect of Perceived & Objective Context on Racial Attitudes and Policy Preferences

Table 1 shows the effects of both objective and subjective context on measures of whites' traditional anti-black prejudice, with three separate models for each dependent variable. If the general argument put forward by theories of racial threat is correct—that the translation of context into threat is a process that occurs in the minds of individuals –one should expect to see relatively similar effects of objective and subjective context on racial attitudes. Tables 1 through 3 show consistent findings across models, and there are clear differences between the effects of objective and subjective context.

The analyses indicate that an increase in percent black in a PSU leads to greater prejudice, and that objective context is the strongest predictor of stereotypical beliefs about blacks. In other words, white respondents who live in areas with more African Americans are more likely to have

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However, the interactions between perceptions and Census numbers were not statistically significant, and the substantive conclusions remained the same. Therefore, the simpler models are reported here.

[19] All independent variables in these models have been recoded to take on values ranging from 0 to 1. Education is a 5-category variable: less than high school, high school, associate or junior college, BA, and graduate school. Age is a 5-category variable: 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60+. Income is a 8-category variable: <$10k, $10k-$19km, $20k-$29k, $30k-$39k, $40k-$49k, $50k-$59k, $60k-$89k, $90k+. South combines three regions reported by the GSS: South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central. This includes the 11 states of the Confederacy plus Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Oklahoma, and West Virginia. Employment status is a dummy variable for full-time work. Occupational prestige is an 8-category variable, recoded from the GSS's *PRESTG80*, which was created from occupation and industry codes from the Census.

negative stereotypes of blacks than respondents living in areas with smaller proportions of blacks. Although the coefficients are not statistically distinguishable from zero, the effects of objective context on the social distance measures—concerning interracial marriage and having black neighbors—indicate that whites living among more blacks have a greater aversion to marry and live with blacks than whites living in more homogeneous areas. These results are relatively consistent with previous findings of racial threat (Taylor 1998).[20] The effect of subjective context, on the other hand, is indistinguishable from zero on measures of group stereotypes and attitudes about interracial marriage, and the coefficients are all small and in the negative direction, even in the models with no measures of objective context (i.e., greater percentages of blacks perceived are related to *less* prejudice).[21]

Furthermore, for the variable about respondents' willingness to live in neighborhoods that are half black—part of the interracial contact measure—perceptions of racial context have a large and negative effect: the more blacks that respondents *think* live in their local community, the more willing they are to have half of their neighbors be African American, regardless of the actual

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[20] Taylor found that percent black in the PSU had a significant effect on *Aversion to Contact with Blacks*, which was an index of items she created from questions about interracial marriage, Rs' willingness to live among blacks, and Rs' willingness to send their children to schools with varying proportions of black students. When I combine the 2000 GSS marriage and neighbors variables into an index, the effect size of %black is comparable to Taylor's.

[21] One might argue that causality could run in the opposite direction. In other words, the more prejudiced a white individual, the more likely he could be to imagine he is surrounded by African Americans. But, in models predicting perceptions with measures of stereotyping or social distance (and the same controls as in Table 1), racial attitudes have no effect on perceptions of racial context. The conclusion remains the same: subjective context is not related to racial attitudes.

"objective" racial context in which they live. In this case, perceptions of context matter while Census numbers do not, and perceptions lead to attitudes different from those predicted by power threat theories.[22]

Other individual- and PSU-level factors also affected prejudicial attitudes. Table 1 shows that white residents of more populated PSUs tend to be less likely to be averse to contact with African Americans than respondents living in less crowded communities, but that Southerners—particularly in the full models—do not appear to differ from non-Southerners consistently in their expressions of prejudice. At the individual level, the older a respondent, the more likely he is to express anti-black prejudice, and the better educated a respondent, the less likely he is to express prejudicial views. Women are also less likely than men to have negative stereotypes of blacks, and are less likely to oppose interracial contact.

The findings presented in Table 2 about "Policies and Practices to Benefit Blacks" raise questions about interpretations of previous findings concerning the relationship between racial context and policy preferences. The percentage of African Americans living in a PSU is related to increased opposition to government efforts to help African Americans, and attitudes that blacks should not push where they are not wanted. One might imagine that diverse contexts therefore lead to less support for political equality for African Americans, as hypothesized by previous theories of context and threat. However, *perceptions* of the racial makeup of one's local community act differently: the directions of the effects vary, they are not statistically significant, and the sizes of the coefficients for perceived context are relatively small. In other words, the perceived percentage of blacks living around a respondent has no effect on her policy preferences, regardless of the Census-reported percentages.

[22] The models in Table 1, 2, and 3 were also rerun using OLS, without any PSU-level variables in the models. The substantive conclusions from the results remained unchanged.

Neither objective indicators nor perceptions of one's local context has a significant impact on preferences about affirmative action or on attitudes that blacks—like other immigrant groups before them—should overcome prejudice without any special favors. This is consistent with previous research on the relationship (or lack thereof) between racial context and attitudes about affirmative action (Campbell N.d.; Taylor 1998).

Again, consistent with previous research, Table 2 shows that education has a liberal effect: the better educated are more likely to disagree with the statement that the Irish, Italians, and Jews worked their way up without favors and that blacks should do the same, and the better educated are also less likely to agree that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted. Region, as in Table 1, has no effect in the full models, while a larger population in the PSU leads to less opposition to policies to benefit African Americans.

The last dimension of whites' attitudes in these analyses pertains to reasons for the differences in SES between whites and blacks. Table 3 shows that the larger the percentage of blacks in a locality, the greater the likelihood that white respondents think racial differences in economic status are due to the inferiority of blacks, and not because of discrimination or limited opportunities. In other words, living in a PSU with more African Americans leads whites to believe that blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing because they have fewer abilities and less motivation. The percentage of blacks living in the PSU is also positively related to respondents believing that it is likely that a white person will be denied a job or promotion while an "equally or less qualified black person" gets one instead. These findings are similar to those found in previous studies (Taylor 1998).

In contrast to these findings for objective context across all three models, Table 3 also shows that respondents' *perceptions* of the percentages of blacks living in their local community have no discernible effects on "system blame," "victim blame," or attitudes about jobs and promotions

being taken away from whites by blacks.[23] So, if a respondent lives in an area with large percentages of black residents, he will be more like to disbelieve structural arguments about racial inequality; however, if he *thinks* he lives near many blacks, he will be no more likely to think blacks are responsible for their relatively poor status than someone who believes her community is 100% white.

In addition, Table 3 indicates that at the individual level, the more educated are more likely to attribute the inferior status of blacks—in jobs, income, and housing, compared to whites—to discrimination and limited educational opportunities. The employed are more likely to think the system is not to blame for racial inequality. In the full models, Southerners, however, are no different from non-Southerners in their attitudes about relations between whites and blacks, all else being equal.

The findings in the section largely confirm the results of past research linking Census data to surveys: the racial composition of localities affect whites' prejudice and political attitudes. The larger the percentage of blacks living in a PSU, the more likely white respondents are to have negative stereotypical beliefs of African Americans, oppose programs to equalize outcomes for blacks and whites, and believe that racial inequality is a result of blacks' lesser abilities or motivation. Even though the coefficients for objective context were not statistically significant or substantively large across *all* the dependent variables, there is a consistent pattern and direction of their effect.

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[23] One might have hypothesized that feelings of economic threat could exaggerate whites' perceptions of the numbers of blacks in their local community; in other words, the causal arrow could be pointing in the opposite direction. Nadeau and Niemi (1995), for example, argue that feelings of threat could lead to greater inaccuracy. However, given the lack of an effect of perceived context on "job threat" in Table 3, we can be more confident that feelings of job threat are not strongly related to the process of estimating the percentage of blacks living in Whites' communities.

These empirical analyses are consistent with the findings of previous research, including analyses using the 1996 GSS.

However, while the results may have been replicated, Tables 1 through 3 do not support the interpretations of these earlier works. Perceptions of blacks in the respondents' local communities had no effect on prejudice or racial attitudes or policy preferences, either alone or when subjective and objective context were both predictors in the models. *In other words, the racial attitudes of respondents who thought their community was 20% black were no different, on average, than respondents who thought their community was 80% black.* This example is not consistent with the assumptions made by scholars who argue that they have found evidence of "racial threat." People are not observing their contexts, making judgments about potential competition and threat, and then acting on this judgments. They may be observing their surroundings, but it is clear that they are fairly myopic, and that their pictures they see are not being translated into political attitudes via the mechanisms specified by Blalock and other scholars.

Discussion & Conclusion

There are numerous studies that link objective Census numbers for blacks (labeled as indicators for black threat) and discrimination at the aggregate level, measured using either individual-level survey data or electoral voting returns.[24] However, the results in this article indicate that individuals' *perceptions* of their context do *not* lead to attitudes similar to those found with

[24] Some researchers argue that given Americans' sensitivity to and social desirability surrounding questions about race, asking respondents directly for their attitudes is problematic (see, for example, Voss 1996). Of course, one drawback of the alternative of using aggregate data (e.g., of vote choice) is the problem of ecological fallacy, trying to use macro-level variables to explain micro-level relationships.

"objective" measures of racial context, across a range of attitudinal variables relevant to racial politics. If the pictures in Americans' heads do not match up with their objective circumstances, and if those pictures do not have an effect on racial attitudes, then researchers need to rethink the concept that Census figures about local concentrations of minorities are measuring. If, as Blalock explains, percent nonwhite is translated in the minds of individuals into fears of competition and power threat, then we must assume that individuals recognize and evaluate their surroundings. Up to this point, research on racial context has measured the direct effect of percent non-white on the motivation to discriminate, but these analyses leave open questions about the meaning of the effects that previous researchers have found over the last few decades. A new interpretation for the solid line in Figure 1 is clearly in order. If percent nonwhite is to continue as an operationalization of "threat" or group conflict, then researchers need to explain how it works without the information being received and accepted by individuals.

Not all studies of racial context have found negative consequences of increasing numbers of blacks. %Black in smaller units (like neighborhoods and zip codes) have been shown to have positive or no effects on whites' attitudes (Carsey 1995; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). Therefore, one might argue that perceptions of "local community" simply reflect the lack of findings of objective "racial threat" at these smaller units of analysis, notwithstanding the fact that many Americans think of their city of residence as their community. To test this idea, I replicated the models in Tables 1 through 3 using perceptions of the racial context of a larger unit: the United States as a whole. The 2000 GSS asks respondents to estimate the percentage of racial groups at the national level. For almost all of the dependent variables in Tables 1, 2, and 3, perceiving larger numbers of blacks in the U.S. had no effect on respondents' attitudes. In other words, stereotyping, social distance, and attitudes about various government policies to help blacks, whether blacks need to work their way up, whether they are to blame for their socioeconomic position, and whether

whites' jobs are threatened by blacks are all unaffected by people's perceptions of how many blacks live in their community. This may be a Goldilocks story, where "local community" is too small and the nation is too large. However, there is little reason to hypothesize that the "just right" intermediate locale would lead to a drastically different outcome, i.e. effects comparable to those found using Census numbers.

Future research should examine *why* environmental determinants affect white racial attitudes. Oliver and Mendelberg (2000) argue that intergroup conflict may not be a necessary requirement for intergroup hostility; instead, they suggest that psychological responses to duress may lead to the same outcome. However, it is still unclear how the environment affects attitudes or psychological responses if people do not see their surroundings.[25] Researchers could, for example, consider that local contexts are observed by political leaders, and that the elites may be translating these demographic facts into broader political messages that are threatening to constituents' status quo, without actually conveying Census information (Blumer 1958).[26] In other words, white political leaders, for example, may be aware of the large or growing size of minority populations amongst their constituents, which could then prompt them to mobilize their co-ethnic constituents to

[25] One concern that arises in studies of context is how long an individual has been exposed to his or her environment. Therefore, I reran the models in Table 1 through 3, adding a control for how long a respondent has lived in his or her city and state. Adding tenure did not change the relationships between context and the dependent variables of interest.

[26] Politicians, for example, may be very sensitive to the number of war casualties in their state, and adjust their support for a war or conflict accordingly (Gartner et al. 2004). Their campaign messages do not necessarily have to stress the actual numbers of local soldiers who have died, and voters may simply use their attitudes about the war generally to decide which candidate to support.

become politically active. The mobilization itself, however, does not have to use the language of geography and numbers, so perceptions of racial context may have no effect on individuals' racial attitudes and behavior, even if objective measures do. If this speculation received some support from initial pilot studies, this interpretation of the mechanism linking geography to attitudes would require more research on elite rhetoric and framing of local threats and interracial competition within specific geographic areas.

The media more generally also serves as a source of information, and possibly, a source of misperception (Gilens 1999; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Mutz 1998). So, even if Americans do not themselves see an outgroup threat on the horizon, their representatives or news reporters may be their guides or translators, explaining the political world as zero-sum and with racial groups as the relevant actors. Ideally, in order to test the relationship between objective and subjective contexts, future research will compare the percent black in a geographic area as reported by the Census to respondents' perceptions of the percentage of Blacks living in that very same geographic area, compare their effects on political judgments, and determine the sources of the pictures in people's heads.[27]

The results of these analyses also raise questions about how to interpret findings of contextual effects that are not racial. Scholars have examined the effects of country-level GDP, county-level partisanship, and zip-code level mean educational attainment on political attitudes, but what do these findings indicate? If a county that is 25 percent nonwhite is not seen by individuals as

[27] Contact with African American neighbors or co-workers may be a source of information for whites. However, while contact is related to context, the addition of measures of interracial contact did not affect the relationships between context (subjective and objective) and the racial and policy attitudes in the tables. Because a number of cases are lost with the addition of these new variables, I do not present these results here.

25 percent nonwhite (or any simple linear transformation of it), it seems implausible to believe that individuals have correct estimates of contextual characteristics that are even less visible, like partisanship or percentage of college graduates in a locality. This issue of visibility also reflects on earlier debates in the research on racial context, centering on what the best unit of analysis would be. One might argue, for example, that people do not experience their entire counties, especially in a state like California, where Los Angeles County has over 9 million residents with many homogeneous neighborhoods and communities making up the heterogeneous whole. When they are not limited by constraints in their data, scholars have tried to look at smaller geographic units, like precincts and zip codes, while worrying that respondents live and work in different precincts and zip codes. Regardless, the choice of geographic unit assumes that average citizens are cognizant of that unit, recognize those surroundings, and make political decisions affected by that contextual knowledge, assumptions that are largely untested.[28]

The research here also leads one to use caution in interpreting the findings of other research projects that do not focus on geographic context and threat. The earlier work by Kinder and Kiewiet can be applied more broadly; scholars are aware that aggregate macroeconomic conditions affect vote choices differently than sociotropic and pocketbook assessments (1981). Similarly, we should be careful about interpreting the attitudinal effects of any objective fact, whether it is the differing conditions of men and women (Stoker and Hochschild 1997) or the amount of foreign direct investment in an industry (Scheve and Slaughter 2002), on people's opinions and actions. Even if scholars find such effects, in order to interpret them properly, we need to understand the

[28] Given Americans' innumeracy, it is worth speculating about the phenomenon of white flight and the tipping point. If Americans are misperceiving their local environments as much as they do the nation, it leads one to wonder whether the tipping point is so low because whites overestimate the number of blacks living in their neighborhood.

source of this information, the absorption of it, and the process by which the facts are understood and translated into political decisions.

Finally, my analyses highlight the causality problem raised by other researchers interested in the power threat hypothesis and context more generally. Allport and his colleagues theorized that people who feel threatened by minorities are those most likely to overestimate their numbers (Pettigrew et al. 1958). However, those who feel surrounded by minorities could also feel more antagonistic toward them. In the past, scholars were concerned that given cross-sectional analyses, it would be impossible to determine if positive effects of diverse contexts were a result of the context or a result of selection bias (Achen and Shively 1995).[29] In other words, whites who lived in racially diverse areas could be influenced by their neighbors and support policies to benefit minorities, or, alternatively, whites with greater racial tolerance and empathy could be choosing to live in these racially diverse areas. Research like Taylor's (1998) on objective context seemed to hint that this worry about causality could be set aside: whites who live with more minorities are more likely to have anti-black sentiments, and it is unlikely they moved into those neighborhoods *because* they felt threatened. So, such researchers might argue that their contextual effects are probably underestimates. However, I have shown that whites who *think* they live among more blacks in their community are more willing to live in integrated neighborhoods, are less prejudiced about interracial

[29] In one attempt to avoid the selection effects, Johnson et al. (2002) use response latency to measure individual's integration in their neighborhoods, and integration as a way to distinguish (partisan) contextual effects from selection effects.

neighborhoods and are more supportive of government spending to help blacks; in this case, selection effects cannot be so easily dismissed.[30]

Highton and Wolfinger (1992) do raise the question of whether the discussion of innumeracy is politically relevant. They find that 19 percent of their NES pilot sample made estimates that added up to 100% or higher, and wonder whether these responses are simply non-attitudes. However, while innumeracy seems to be quite common, no more than 5 percent of the GSS 2000 sample gave a "don't know" or "no answer" response when asked to estimate the percentages of different racial and ethnic groups in both their communities as well as in the nation.[31] Furthermore, if misperceptions of the size of different groups in society are simply non-attitudes, then we are back to the fundamental question of how to interpret the body of research on objective context and "racial threat." I would argue that scholars have an impressive set of robust and consistent findings that as yet lacks a satisfactory explanatory mechanism.

[30] For the spending items alone as a dependent variable, the coefficient for perceptions of context was -.19, and it approached levels of statistical significance (p=.06).

[31] Even if Americans have no true underlying attitudes about the percentage of minority groups in the U.S. and in their community, the proliferation of state lotteries provide some evidence that Americans act on a daily basis on their innumeracy, and that these decisions can have political consequences.

APPENDIX: QUESTION WORDING

Stereotyping of Blacks

Now I have some questions about different groups in our society. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the characteristics of people in a group can be rated. In the first statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in that group are "rich." A score of 7 means that you think almost everyone in the group are "poor." A score of 4 means you think that the group is not towards one end or another, and of course you may choose any number in between that comes closest to where you think people in the group stand.

- Where would you rate Whites in general on this scale?
- Blacks?

The second set of characteristics asks if people in the group tend to be hard-working or if they tend to be lazy.

- Where would you rate Whites in general on this scale?
- Blacks?

The next set asks if people in each group tend to be violence prone or if they tend not to be prone to violence?

- Where would you rate Whites in general on this scale?
- Blacks?

Do people in these groups tend to be unintelligent or tend to be intelligent?

- Where would you rate Whites in general on this scale?
- Blacks?

In the next statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in the group have a "commitment to strong families." A score of 7 means that you think almost everyone in the group "lacks a commitment to strong families." A score of 4 means that you think that the group is not towards one end or the other, and of course you may choose any number in between that comes closest to where you think people in the group stand.

- Where would you rate Whites in general on this scale?
- Blacks?

In the next statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in the group have a "commitment to the fair and equal treatment of all groups in society." A score of 7 means that you think almost everyone in the group "lacks a commitment to the fair and equal treatment of all groups in society." A score of 4 means that you think that the group is not towards one end or the other, and of course you may choose any number in between that comes closest to where you think people in the group stand.

- Where would you rate Whites in general on this scale?
- Blacks?

Aversion to Contact with Blacks

Now I'm going to ask you about different types of contact with various groups of people. In each situation would you please tell me whether you would be very much in favor of it happening, somewhat in favor, neither in favor nor opposed to it happening, somewhat opposed, or very much opposed to it happening?

- -Living in a neighborhood where half of your neighbors were Blacks?
- -How about having a close relative or family member marry a black person?

Do you think there should be laws against marriages between (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) and Whites?

Oppose Government Helping Blacks

Some people think that (Blacks/Negroes/African-Americans) have been discriminated against for so long that the government has a special obligation to help improve their living standards. Others believe that the government should not be giving special treatment to (Blacks/Negroes/African-Americans). Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you made up your mind on this?

(The 5-point scale runs from "I strongly agree the government is obligated to help Blacks" to "I strongly agree that government shouldn't give special treatment." The midpoint is "I agree with both answers."

We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. Are we spending too much money, too little money, or about the right amount on...

-Improving the conditions of Blacks

-Assistance to Blacks

Shouldn't Push

(Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) shouldn't push themselves where they're not wanted.

(Options range from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly.")

Affirmative Action

Some people say that because of past discrimination, Blacks should be given preference in hiring and promotion. Others say that such preference in hiring and promotion of Blacks is wrong because it discriminates against Whites. What about your opinion -- are you for or against preferential hiring and promotion of Blacks? Strongly or not strongly?

No Special Favors

Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the following statement: Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.

System Blame

On the average (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are . . .

-Mainly due to discrimination?

-Because most (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) don't have the chance for education that it takes to rise out of poverty?

Victim Blame

On the average (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are . . .

-Because most (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) have less in-born ability to learn?

-Because most (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves up out of poverty?

Job Threat From Blacks

What do you think the chances are these days that a white person won't get a job or promotion while an equally or less qualified black person gets one instead? Is this very likely, somewhat likely, or not very likely to happen these days?

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Figure 1

Blalock's Power Threat Theory

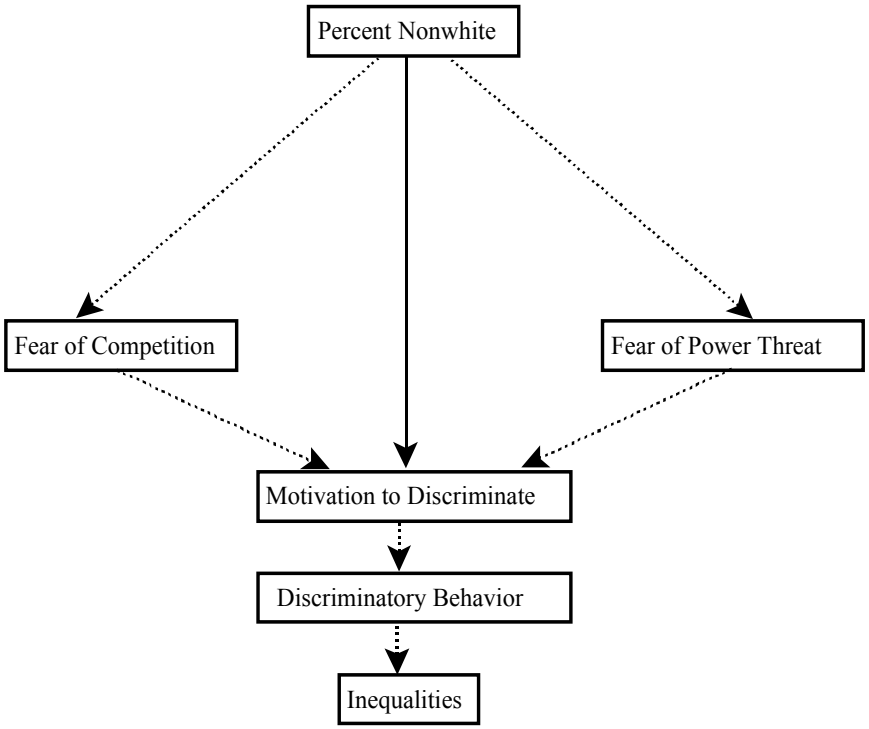

Table 1: Anti-Black Prejudice and Social Distance

	Negative Stereotyping of Blacks			Opposition to Interracial Contact		
	B (SE)	B (SE)	B (SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)
Constant	.481 **	.474 **	.480 **	.359 **	.369 **	.375 **
	(.015)	(.016)	(.015)	(.034)	(.039)	(.039)
%Black (Perception)		**-.020**	**-.033**		**-.036**	**-.046**
		(.027)	(.027)		(.076)	(.076)
%Black (Census)	**.166** **		**.159** **	**.110**		**.127**
	(.044)		(.047)	(.102)		(.118)
South	-.003	.018 *	.000	.047 *	.047 *	.032
	(.010)	(.009)	(.010)	(.023)	(.022)	(.026)
ln(size of PSU)	-.039 *	.000	-.028	-.107 *	-.090 *	-.113 *
	(.019)	(.019)	(.019)	(.045)	(.044)	(.049)
Education	-.032 *	-.036 *	-.033 *	-.171 **	-.165 **	-.162 **
	(.015)	(.016)	(.016)	(.033)	(.040)	(.040)
Age	.049 **	.051 **	.050 **	.200 **	.194 **	.193 **
	(.011)	(.011)	(.011)	(.023)	(.029)	(.029)
Gender	-.020 **	-.020 **	-.018 *	-.026 #	-.034 #	-.033 #
	(.007)	(.007)	(.007)	(.016)	(.019)	(.019)
Income	.021 #	.020	.017	-.039	-.002	-.005
	(.013)	(.013)	(.013)	(.028)	(.035)	(.036)
Employment Status	-.004	-.004	-.003	.019	.011	.011
	(.008)	(.008)	(.008)	(.017)	(.021)	(.021)
Job Prestige	-.031	-.034	-.034	.002	-.052	-.051
	(.020)	(.021)	(.021)	(.044)	(.053)	(.053)
# of individual units	797	766	766	739	463	463
# of contextual units	99	98	98	99	93	93
log-likelihood	680.527	643.798	646.993	95.060	61.869	61.230
sd (u_0)	.010	.014	.006	.044	.001	.002
sd (u_1)		.061	.053		.172	.170

Note: 2000 GSS, White respondents only. The coefficients reported are from linear mixed-effects models. 1= high prejudice, 0 = low prejudice. * p<.05, ** p<.01, # p<.10

Table 2: Opposition to Policies and Practices to Benefit African Americans

	Oppose Govt Helping Blacks			Blacks Shouldn't Push			Oppose Affirmative Action			No Special Favors		
	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)
Constant	.653 **	.657 **	.670 **	.558 **	.495 **	.524 **	.795 **	.817 **	.819 **	.893 **	.863 **	.869 **
	(.040)	(.058)	(.058)	(.043)	(.061)	(.060)	(.039)	(.051)	(.052)	(.041)	(.056)	(.056)
%Black (Perception)		**-.088**	**-.112**		**.163**	**.111**		**.024**	**.015**		**.020**	**.005**
		(.097)	(.098)		(.108)	(.107)		(.082)	(.084)		(.081)	(.083)
%Black (Census)	**.215** #		**.289** #	**.383** **		**.639** **	**-.015**		**.078**	**.122**		**.164**
	(.114)		(.175)	(.121)		(.176)	(.116)		(.156)	(.125)		(.177)
South	.028	.072 *	.039	.052 #	.075 *	.000	.049 *	.022	.014	.051 #	.065 *	.047
	(.025)	(.032)	(.037)	(.027)	(.033)	(.038)	(.025)	(.027)	(.031)	(.027)	(.030)	(.036)
ln(size of PSU)	-.184 **	-.219 **	-.268 **	-.180 **	.004	-.113	-.076	-.036	-.049	-.117 *	-.109	-.138 #
	(.051)	(.069)	(.075)	(.051)	(.068)	(.074)	(.050)	(.057)	(.063)	(.055)	(.067)	(.074)
Education	-.154 **	-.101 #	-.096 #	-.234 **	-.288 **	-.275 **	-.072 #	-.080	-.078	-.246 **	-.246 **	-.242 **
	(.035)	(.053)	(.053)	(.042)	(.062)	(.062)	(.039)	(.053)	(.053)	(.036)	(.053)	(.054)
Age	.019	.011	.010	.219 **	.248 **	.242 **	-.004	.005	.005	.030	.039	.040
	(.026)	(.038)	(.038)	(.032)	(.045)	(.044)	(.028)	(.039)	(.039)	(.026)	(.039)	(.039)
Gender	-.052 **	-.027	-.024	-.067 **	-.105 **	-.102 **	.001	.023	.024	-.035 *	-.031	-.029
	(.017)	(.025)	(.025)	(.021)	(.031)	(.030)	(.018)	(.025)	(.025)	(.017)	(.025)	(.025)
Income	.076 **	.072	.064	-.064 #	-.070	-.083	.094 **	.074 #	.072	.035	.114 **	.111 *
	(.030)	(.044)	(.045)	(.037)	(.056)	(.055)	(.032)	(.045)	(.045)	(.030)	(.045)	(.045)
Employment Status	.046 *	.053 #	.054 *	-.026	-.033	-.034	.007	.016	.016	.018	.026	.028
	(.019)	(.028)	(.028)	(.024)	(.033)	(.033)	(.020)	(.027)	(.027)	(.019)	(.027)	(.027)
Job Prestige	.039	.043	.040	-.086	-.093	-.085	.038	-.035	-.035	-.009	-.103	-.104
	(.049)	(.071)	(.071)	(.061)	(.084)	(.083)	(.054)	(.073)	(.073)	(.050)	(.072)	(.072)
# of individual units	982	469	469	1032	467	467	1056	510	510	1099	533	533
# of contextual units	100	93	93	97	93	93	100	96	96	100	96	96
log-likelihood	-94.144	-63.833	-63.304	-334.033	-147.085	-141.425	-206.934	-83.402	-84.215	-159.238	-97.368	-97.749
sd (u_0)	.050	.056	.053	.005	.011	.003	.039	.003	.003	.065	.065	.064
sd (u_1)		.263	.260		.054	.012		.006	.006		.011	.006

Note: 2000 GSS, White respondents only. The coefficients reported are from linear mixed-effects models. 1= opposition to spending, programs, etc., 0= support. * p<.05, ** p<.01, # p<.10

Table 3: Attitudes about Relations Between Whites and Blacks in Society

	Not System Blame			Victim Blame			Job Threat From Blacks		
	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)	B(SE)
Constant	.680 **	.716 **	.728 **	.421 **	.459 **	.478 **	.415 **	.386 **	.402 **
	(.051)	(.074)	(.074)	(.041)	(.060)	(.059)	(.044)	(.065)	(.064)
%Black (Perception)		**.038**	**.002**		**.037**	**-.011**		**.139**	**.111**
		(.108)	(.110)		(.091)	(.100)		(.101)	(.101)
%Black (Census)	**.309** *		**.408** #	**.268** *		**.531** **	**.255** *		**.470** *
	(.153)		(.231)	(.122)		(.191)	(.124)		(.195)
South	.106 **	.120 **	.076	.033	.049	-.002	.036	.021	-.036
	(.033)	(.040)	(.047)	(.026)	(.032)	(.037)	(.027)	(.036)	(.043)
ln(size of PSU)	-.116 #	-.049	-.119	-.056	-.027	-.135 #	-.006	.042	-.044
	(.065)	(.089)	(.096)	(.052)	(.071)	(.076)	(.052)	(.080)	(.085)
Education	-.290 **	-.178 **	-.170 *	-.279 **	-.267 **	-.257 **	-.144 **	-.090	-.079
	(.051)	(.071)	(.071)	(.041)	(.058)	(.058)	(.043)	(.062)	(.062)
Age	-.053	-.021	-.019	.112 **	.046	.045	.068 *	.110 *	.107 *
	(.037)	(.052)	(.052)	(.030)	(.043)	(.043)	(.032)	(.044)	(.044)
Gender	-.028	-.046	-.041	-.029	-.048 #	-.041	.001	.003	.007
	(.024)	(.034)	(.034)	(.020)	(.028)	(.028)	(.021)	(.030)	(.029)
Income	-.029	-.082	-.090	-.021	.038	.035	-.010	-.084	-.092 #
	(.043)	(.061)	(.061)	(.034)	(.050)	(.049)	(.037)	(.055)	(.055)
Employment Status	.110 **	.104 **	.109 **	-.038 #	-.038	-.032	.031	.054 #	.056 #
	(.027)	(.037)	(.037)	(.022)	(.030)	(.030)	(.024)	(.032)	(.032)
Job Prestige	.130 #	-.064	-.065	-.033	-.125	-.119	.018	.004	.011
	(.071)	(.098)	(.098)	(.058)	(.080)	(.080)	(.061)	(.083)	(.083)
# of individual units	1033	501	501	1004	484	484	1116	533	533
# of contextual units	99	96	96	99	96	96	99	94	94
log-likelihood	-475.800	-224.319	-223.333	-245.248	-115.790	-112.998	-418.793	-188.926	-186.775
sd (u_0)	.048	.083	.077	.032	.057	.040	.005	.080	.072
sd (u_1)		.007	.007		.012	.230		.011	.008

Note: 2000 GSS, White respondents only. The coefficients reported are from linear mixed-effects models. 1= blame victim, perceive job threat, 0= blame system, no threat. * p<.05, ** p<.01, # p<.10