Maps and Pictures in Our Heads:

Testing the Assumptions of Power Threat Theory

Cara Wong
Jake Bowers
Katherine W. Drake

Department of Political Science
University of Michigan
5700 Haven Hall
505 S. State St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1045
cjwong@umich.edu

DRAFT: Please do not cite without permission of the authors

Paper prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, 7-10 April 2005.

We would like to thank the participants of the NES workshop at the University of Michigan for their helpful comments and suggestions. We would also like to thank the Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan for the funding to conduct our pilot study.

Abstract

Over the past half century, much social science research has focused on understanding how where people live influences what they believe and how they act. Much of this research has discovered that characteristics of places - like "percent black in the county" - tend to be correlated with aggregate behavior - like "percent voting for David Duke" or "number of lynchings." As these examples suggest, most of this work has focused on race relations. The theoretical argument animating this general field, across political science, education, sociology, social epidemiology, and geography, is that individuals react more or less rationally to their surroundings. Thus, anti-black discrimination in the mid-20th century in the South, the story goes, was caused by whites who felt threatened by large black populations; contemporaneous feelings of threat were what led to discrimination, more than prejudice socialized from childhood. What is missing from all of this work is an appreciation that people must *see* the racial characteristics of their surrounding and *judge* the consequences of those characteristics before changing attitudes or behavior. Therefore, despite a string of findings supporting this "racial threat" argument, what scholars do not know is how whites learn how many blacks live nearby and if what Lippmann called "the pictures in our heads" actually map onto reality. In this paper, we address three assumptions of power threat theory in order to understand what people (both blacks and whites) know and think about the racial characteristics of where they live. Using a pilot study with an innovative research design, we analyze maps drawn by respondents of their "community" along with their completed surveys. We discuss how people see the place where they live - including its racial characteristics - and whether their self-described communities overlap with the typical geographic units studied by researchers. We also examine whether individuals understand their contexts as threatening, and find little evidence overall for the mechanism linking Census numbers and political outcomes as laid out by the power threat theory.

As the United States becomes ever more multicultural, there is a danger that the walls that currently exist between racial and ethnic groups may grow even higher and harder to cross. "Hyper-segregation" in major metropolitan areas means that white and black children are growing up in different worlds (Glaeser and Vigdor 2001; Schmitt 2001); gated communities divide "people like us" from the "other" with both real and imaginary boundaries (Blakely and Snyder 1997); and rising numbers of immigrants are attracted to California, Florida, and New York, while native-born whites are fleeing these "magnet states" (Frey 2002). Given the inexorable diversification of the country, current research on racial threat would lead us to believe that such segregation will help us avoid historical problems like lynchings and poll taxes: whites who live among greater numbers of nonwhites are more likely to have discriminatory attitudes and behaviors, so ethnic enclaves should lead to greater racial harmony at the aggregate level. This conclusion about race relations is problematic, both normatively and empirically.

Over the past half century, much social science research has focused on understanding how individuals' contexts influence their racial attitudes, policy opinions, and voting behavior (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1983). 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.[1] For example, according to a simple version of the power threat hypothesis, the more blacks that live in an area, the more likely that whites will feel threatened and try to repress any political participation among blacks (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).

The previous research on the effects of individuals' surroundings all assumes that individuals perceive their contexts and change their attitudes and actions in reaction to their perceptions. However, the measures of racial context that researchers use are objective numbers from Census data, not the

[1] Although their concern was with child development in neighborhoods, Jencks and Mayer (1990) developed a taxonomy of theories for why contexts matter that can extend to political attitudes and behaviors: epidemic theories, theories of collective socialization, institutional models, competition models, and relative deprivation models.

subjective perceptions of respondents themselves.[2] We know 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 or misperception about political facts more generally can affect both values and policy decisions (Gilens 2001; Hochschild 2001). Furthermore, scholars studying the effects of the economy on 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).

The American public's level of political information and knowledge is often surprisingly low (Delli Carpini and Keeter 1997). Ordinary citizens also have difficulty understanding the concepts involved in statistics, and they often make incorrect inferences based on personal experiences or recent, salient events (see, for example, Tversky and Kahneman 1974). For example, surveys have shown that Americans greatly overestimate the numbers of blacks, Jews, and Hispanics in the country (Gladwell 1995; Nadeau et al. 1993; Nadeau and Niemi 1995; Smith 2001; Wong 2002), and researchers have begun to look at the extent and causes of Americans' innumeracy about minority groups (Highton and Wolfinger 1992; Nadeau et al. 1993; Sigelman and Niemi 2001; Wong 2002). If the pictures of America that citizens have in their heads do not match up to the numbers reported in the Census, what, in fact, are scholars measuring when they find that the percentage of blacks living in a county affects racial attitudes?

Using data from a pilot study we conducted in the Fall 2004, in this paper, we examine three assumptions of power threat theory that rely on ordinary citizens' observations and levels of information. Do people define their "community" in ways comparable to governmental bureaucracies? Are people's

[2] Of course, the U.S. Census does not provide perfectly accurate "objective" measures of racial context — problems of over- and under-counting of minority populations have been well-documented. In addition, the fact that Census data is only collected every 10 years means that it does not change as quickly or as continuously as the areas it aims to measure. Despite these problems, we know of no other more accurate source of data for the kind of small geographic units that are the core sampling unit for this study (and for understanding threat and racial context more generally).

perceptions of their local area accurate? And, do people view the presence of members of their outgroup as "threatening"?

Power Threat Theory:

In *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, Key (1949) showed that counties with the highest percentages of African American populations tended also to be places with the highest rates of voting by whites. Whites in the Black Belt — who should be 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 blacks. This theory posed a rationalist counter-argument to other explanations for the discriminatory behavior of whites in the South based on pre-adult socialized racism.

This relationship between the percentage of blacks (or other minorities) living in communities and discrimination by whites has been replicated over time and space (for recent examples, see Stein et al. 2000; Taylor 2000). Racial context also affects behavior as well, with larger populations of African Americans leading to greater white voter registration, voting for racist candidates, and opposition to black leaders such as Jesse Jackson (Giles and Buckner 1993, 1996; Heer 1959; Key 1949; Prysby 1989; Voss 1996; Wright 1977). Quillian has applied this research to the changing demographics of the European Union, using the percentage of non-EEC immigrants and the 5-year average GDP per capita to predict anti-immigrant and racial prejudice (1995). These dependent variables are all hypothesized results of the threat that whites feel in response to living among greater numbers of minorities; the larger the numbers, the more political and economic threat perceived.

More generally, scholars have invoked ideas about threat to explain a wide range of phenomena. In particular, the concept of threat has been used to explain white racial attitudes and prejudice (Bobo and Hutchings 1996; Cain, Citrin, and Wong 2000; Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Giles 1977; Glaser 1994; Kinder and Mendelberg 1995; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Quillian 1996), political intolerance (Feldman and Stenner 1994; Shamir and Sullivan 1983), group and partisan identity among whites (Giles and Evans 1985; Giles and Hertz 1994), political contributions to a pro-choice

organization (Miller, Krosnick and Lowe 2000), attitudes toward immigration (Bobo and Hutchings 1994; Citrin et al. 1997), voting on California propositions (Campbell, Wong, and Citrin 2002), and the occurrence of lynchings and intergroup conflict between whites and blacks (Olzak 1992; Olzak et al. 1996; Tolnay and Beck 1989, 1995). Also, the use of threat by whites to deter the political participation of blacks has occurred frequently in the history of black-white relations in the United States. Specifically, the use of physical threats to instill fear and quiescence was a staple of the pre-Voting Rights Act disenfranchisement of blacks in the southern United States (Keech and Sistrom 1994; McAdam 1982; Tolnay and Beck 1995).[3]

The concept of threat was developed most rigorously as an explanation for inter-group conflict, discrimination, and prejudice in 1967 by Hubert Blalock in *Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations*. In this book he carefully presented a general theoretical framework for understanding phenomena such as the violence and discrimination often aimed at blacks in the southern United States.

Figure 1 shows a schematic version of Blalock's power threat theory. We replicated his Figure 9 (1967, 29) using dotted lines to represent the causal linkages that he envisioned. The solid line that directly connects "percent nonwhite" to "motivation to discriminate" is not in Blalock's original figure. We have added it here to represent what past research has actually tested and what much past research has found — a positive relationship between the size of a minority population and anti-minority attitudes and behaviors among members of a majority group. Despite the conceptual power and broad applicability of this theory, most of the work that has used it, up to now, has relied on a number of assumptions that have not been tested.

The theory, as depicted by Blalock, assumes that "context" (measured most often as proportion black living "near" an individual) must be (1) accurately perceived by the individuals and (2) understood to be a threat (e.g. shown by the dotted lines between "percent nonwhite" and the "fears" in Figure 1).

[3] In addition, the perception of racial threat has been used to explain black intolerance of racists and political mobilization (Green and Waxman 1987; Bowers 1997).

Until recently no one has adequately measured *either* perceptions of context *or* understandings of context as posing threats to whites in a political context.[4]

This 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. Of course, in between "percent nonwhite" and "fear of competition" and "fear of power threat," one ought to insert another variable called "perceptions." It is hard to imagine how individuals feel threatened by their context if those individuals do not perceive their context. Ignorance, in this case, ought to lead to bliss, not threat.

How reasonable are these assumptions that individuals perceive their context accurately and that they interpret their perceptions as threatening? Recently, Wong (2005a) showed that individuals' perceptions of their contexts do not match racial demographic characteristics as measured by the Census. Americans overestimate the percentages of all minority groups in the U.S. and underestimate the percentage of whites. For example, on average, respondents to the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) estimated that the nation was 31% black, while the actual number from the U.S. Census in 2000 was 12% (Smith 2001).

Furthermore, these perceptions of context may have quite different effects on political attitudes than do Census measures. Results using the Census tend to find that larger percentages of blacks are associated with more anti-black sentiment expressed by whites. Using subjective perceptions, however, Wong (2005b) found that the greater the perceived percentage black in one's "local community", the

[4] 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 and cheaper proxies for people's perceptions. The few studies that have made these types of comparisons indicate that Census numbers cannot serve as such proxies. Although, to the best of our knowledge, the Wong (2002) study discussed below is the only political science work comparing objective and subjective contextual effects, sociologists and criminologists have long been interested in how both objective context and perceptions of that context affect crime and fear of crime (Chiricos 1997; Matei et al. 2001; Sampson et al. 2002). Recently, Chiricos, et al (2001), for example, found that while Census numbers were not strong predictors of fear, people's perceptions of their racial context had a strong relationship with worries about personal safety.

lesser one's "aversion to contact with blacks" and the *greater* one's support for "equal outcomes".[5] These findings suggest that subjective perceptions are not simply rationalizations of anti-black sentiment, since the effects are not in the same direction. If objective and subjective context are not strongly related, and if they have separate and distinct effects, what exactly are researchers measuring with these two different operationalizations of the "threatening" effects of race?[6] If, as Blalock explains, percent nonwhite is translated in the minds of individuals into fears of competition and power threat, then researchers must assume that individuals recognize and evaluate their context accurately. However, researchers have found — for policies relating to race, foreign policy, and environmental issues — a peculiar relationship between information and feelings of threat that needs to be explored further: those who feel threatened are more likely to be inaccurate, yet those who are in a more precarious situation claim greater knowledge (Nadeau and Niemi 1995; Pierce et al. 2000). Measuring the direct effects of percent nonwhite on discriminatory attitudes and behaviors without examining knowledge or perceptions fails to test Key's and Blalock's theories. And, Wong's previous findings suggest that the linkages assumed by Blalock may not be as strong or straightforward as one might predict.

If individuals' perceptions of context have different effects than Census measures, how should we explain the plethora of findings that show a positive relationship between percentage black in a geographical area and anti-black attitudes? One possible alternative explanation for this relationship uses elites as a moderating variable instead of individual-level economic and political threat perceptions. In other words, white political leaders, for example, may be aware of the large or growing size of minority

[5] "Aversion to Contact" and "Equal Outcomes" are indices developed by Taylor (1998) using the 1990 General Social Survey (GSS). Wong (2002) replicated these indices using identical items in the 2000 GSS. "Aversion to contact" is a measure of social distance — reactions to interracial marriage, black neighbors, and integrated schools — and "Equal Outcomes" measures support for government programs to help blacks and assessments of current levels of spending for "assistance to blacks."

[6] Objective context in the GSS is measured at the PSU (Primary Sampling Unit) level (containing one or more counties), while the subjective perceptions were for respondents' "local community." Comparing the latter to a PSU is not ideal, although it is not clear what is a good match; respondents were not given any definition or additional information about what "local community" meant. Therefore, there is a need to (1) ask respondents about their perceptions of clearly defined geographic units (like their block or city) and (2) ask respondents to tell researchers the boundaries of their own communities. This second task allows respondents to mark tertiary streets that may be personally important for interaction between neighbors, yet miniscule on official maps (Grannis 1998).

populations amongst their constituents, which could then prompt them to mobilize their co-ethnic constituents to 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 voting behavior, even if objective measures do. The media more generally also serves as a source of information, and possibly, a source of misperceptions (Gilens 1999; Mutz 1998).

Equally important as the assumption that individuals accurately perceive their contexts is the assumption that these contexts are seen as threats. Blalock modeled the link from percentage nonwhite in an individual's community to the motivation to discriminate — with two intermediary factors of "fear of competition" and "fear of power threat" that were never measured directly for the individual. Bowers (1998a, 1998b) created measures of perceptions of economic, social, and political threat, but his analyses showed no relationship between the propensity of whites to perceive threat from blacks and the proportion of blacks at the county level.[7]

One final concern about the power threat theory is that it hypothesizes about the effects of blacks in a locale on whites' political opinions and actions. While the theory has been applied to Europeans' attitudes about immigrants (Quillian 1995), it has predominantly been applied to whites. While this makes historical sense, given the early emphasis by Key on whites in the Southern Black Belt, we worry about a theory that is limited to only one racial group. Power threat theory does not, for example, explain how blacks feel in these very same locations. Do *they* feel threatened by whites (a circumstance that may be much more realistic than the reverse)? Furthermore, it is unclear whether this theory be generalized to apply to other groups in society, both in terms of the "threat" posed and the political actor. Would white Americans, for example, feel threatened by Latinos living in their communities, or could African Americans feel threatened by Asian Americans?

[7]These measures were included on the National Election Studies 1997 Pilot Study (Rosenstone et al. 1998). See Bowers (1998a) for a report on the performance of these measures on the Pilot Study.

These papers by Wong and Bowers can be seen as attempts to unpack power threat theory by explicitly matching Blalock's models to the pictures in the heads of ordinary citizens (Lippman 1922).[8] Building on these works, we designed a pilot study that combines both pseudoenvironments and real-world environments to help advance this large area of social science research. The study (1) asks individuals about their experiences in and perceptions of a variety of levels of geography (and allows individualized definitions of relevant context), (2) is designed to ensure variation along the key dimensions of context, (3) directly attempts to measure perceptions of threat, as well as relevant political attitudes and behaviors, and (4) synthesizes environmental factors — like economic and demographic trends — with the individual-level information.

Data

The data we use in this paper comes from a pilot in-person survey that we conducted in the Fall of 2004 of 62 individuals living in one county in the state of Michigan.

There are three requirements for a sample design for any survey that would provide data to test and expand upon power threat theory. First, power threat theory explains the psychological reactions of individuals to characteristics of their geographies. Any design that provides a persuasive test of this theory must sample enough of both geographies and individuals to enable statistical tests at both levels (of context and of individual) to detect substantively meaningful effects. Second, such a design must allow researchers to locate individuals accurately within geographic areas. Third, any sample design that analysts desire to use to distinguish between the effects of contexts and the effects of individuals must sample multiple individuals per context. And, a design that is to be used to estimate the effects of

[8] There is work that uses implicit measures to assess the integration in one's community via latency response measures (Johnson et al. 2002). The main purpose, however, of this innovation is to account for selection effects, rather than to explore why perceptions (of neighborhood partisanship, in their case) might differ from "objective" measures. We wish to attain direct measurements of perceptions in this study.

contextual units must sample as many contextual units as possible, stratifying on key independent variables.[9]

We used Census block groups as the basis of our sampling.[10] After stratifying and sampling based on non-rural block groups in the county, we purchased a white pages sample of names, addresses, and phone numbers.[11] While we would like to have interviewed equal numbers of white and black respondents, our final sample contained 41 whites and 21 African Americans.[12] The white respondents lived in block groups that ranged from 0 to 74% black, and the black respondents lived in block groups that ranged from 3 to 97% black.

In addition to answering a number of survey questions, the respondents were also asked to refer to a number of maps. They were first shown two maps – one centered on the block group in which their house was located and one encompassing all of the county from which the block groups were sampled – and were asked to draw on either map the area that made up their "local community." The approximate location of their house was indicated on each map, and the maps indicated both block group boundaries as well as nearby streets. They were then asked about their perceptions of the proportion of blacks and whites living in that community. Later, they were shown a map with their block group highlighted, and were again asked to describe the racial breakdown of the block group. Thus, we were able to gauge perceptions in different geographic contexts.

Analyses

[9]See Stoker and Bowers (2002) and the cites contained therein for more on the design of multi-level samples.

[10] We plan to use Census block groups as the basis of our sampling. Census blocks are the "atomic unit" of the deeply nested geographic divisions that the Census uses to measure the population, and block groups are composed of blocks. Racial characteristics for blocks are scrambled for purposes of anonymity, so the block group is the smallest unit for which reliable racial data are available. Any individual identified by Census block group can be later identified by any other larger Census geography. In other words, we can aggregate upwards. This would not be true of zip code or county, for example. Thus, by stratifying and sampling based on block groups, we can later answer the question of which geographic unit ought to be seen as most important for the effects of racial context.

[11] In order to obtain both white and black respondents, we conducted a brief phone interview as a screener and as our way to schedule in-person interviews when appropriate.

[12] The race of the interviewer was matched with the race of the respondent.

The first question to be addressed is how people define their contexts. We wanted to allow individuals to define for themselves (using maps) what they mean by "neighborhood" and "community," rather than assume that the dynamics of power threat theory *must* occur within geographic units defined by government officials.

While we were designing the map-drawing questions, we had contradictory desires. On the one hand, we were skeptical that people knew where the boundaries of any government-designated units in which they resided lay. There was no reason why a respondent even had to include her own residence in her perception of her "local community." And, unlike the drawing of Congressional districts, we did not restrict respondents to communities of contiguous areas. On the other hand, for ease of coding, we were very hopeful that respondents would follow the bold lines on the map, which designated block group boundaries. The former desire was met – satisfying our scientific curiosity – but our practical hopes for clear and easy data management were thwarted.

Almost 2/3 of the respondents (n=38) chose to draw their community on the smaller maps centered around their block group (see Figure 2 for examples), while the rest chose the larger ones (23) (see Figure 3 for examples). One respondent did not draw on the maps, explaining that she did not think of her "local community" in these ways. Regardless of the size of their "local community," almost none of the respondents' drawings followed block group lines neatly. A couple of the maps had non-contiguous areas marked, some marked areas as small as a single street, while others encompassed the entire large map.

Later in the survey, respondents were shown the "small" map again, this time with their block group highlighted in yellow. They were told that the borders on the map showed the boundaries of what the Census Bureau defines as a "block group." Respondents were then asked whether they thought the highlighted area captured what they thought of as their neighborhood. 61% agreed that their block group was indeed a reasonable representation of their neighborhood.

Our findings suggest that people's definitions of "local community" vary a great deal in size.[13] Their definitions of "neighborhood" also vary, although a majority of respondents think their block group is roughly equivalent; for those who disagreed, we do not know whether they believe their neighborhood would be smaller or larger. Finally, these data indicate that people do not tend to equate their neighborhood with their "local community"; otherwise, we would have expected to see many more drawings that corresponded with the block group boundaries on their small maps. In other words, the assumption made in the power threat theory that people observe and define their communities in similar ways – particularly along lines defined by government agencies – is not clearly met.

A second assumption of power threat theory is that people perceive the racial make-up of the areas in which they live. We are interested in whether they are accurate when it comes to describing their contexts. The respondents were asked to describe the percentages of blacks and whites in the nation as a whole, their "local community," and their block group. Thus, we can compare their perceptions with the Census reports for the same geographic units. For the analyses presented here, the area we use as a point of comparison for respondents' "local community" is any block group that is included in their drawing. For example, if a "community" was drawn to overlap into three different block groups, then the "objective" data used is the Census-reported numbers of whites and blacks for those three block groups together.[14]

Figure 4 shows two scatterplots, comparing respondents' perceptions of blacks and whites in their block groups with the Census percentages for the respective groups in the same areas. As can be seen from the plot on the left, the fitted smoothed curve is flatter than a 45-degree line, indicating that

[13] We plan to calculate the actual area enclosed in respondents' communities. In that way, we will be able to get a better sense of the range of size of communities in square mileage, not just number of block groups.

[14] In future analyses, we will try different strategies for calculating what constitutes the "objective" counterpart to the perceived "local community" to determine if our findings are robust to different coding schemes. For example, other methods of coding are to count *only* block groups that are entirely contained within the community drawings, or to calculate the proportion of a block group that is included and use that proportion to determine the overall racial make-up. One problem with the latter, however, is that the data do not allow us to determine how evenly or where the population within a block group actually resides.

respondents' perceptions of the percentage of blacks living in their neighborhood is greater than that reported by the Census. Conversely, their estimates of the number of whites exceed the objective numbers. Figure 5 presents comparable plots for respondents' communities. At this geographic level, the line for %black appears even flatter and the %white steeper than those in Figure 4, indicating that perceptions of blacks are even more overestimated at the community level compared to comparable Census statistics, and the percentages of whites are even more underestimated.

Another way to think about this difference is presented in Table 1. Table 1a presents the mean percentage of whites and blacks in the U.S., compared to the 2000 Census figures. Similar to the pattern presented in Figures 4 and 5, our respondents overestimated the number of blacks in the nation and underestimated the numbers of whites.[15] Table 1b presents the same comparison for the respondents' "local community" and Table 1c for their block group; the means are calculated for the differences between subjective and objective context at the level of the individual respondent. While the percentages of blacks are consistently overestimated and that of whites underestimated, an interesting pattern emerges from comparing these different geographic units: perceptions become more accurate at more localized levels. In other words, while respondents tended to overestimate the percentage of blacks in the nation by 18 percentage points – thinking the nation is 30% black instead of 12% -- the overestimate at the block group level was only 9 percentage points.

Of course, it is possible that ordinary citizens simply do not have a sophisticated understanding of percentages. The gap between objective and subjective context, in that case, could result from a simple lack of mathematical understanding. In order to determine whether this is the case, we included in our survey multiple measures of their perceptions of context. In addition to being asked what percentage of blacks, for example, lived in their "local community," they were asked (later in the survey) to look again at the map they drew and say whether their community was "mostly white," "mostly black," "half and

[15] It should be noted that our respondents' perceptions of %white and %black in the U.S. in our pilot study are about the same as the perceptions of respondents in the 2000 GSS: 31% was the mean estimated for blacks, and 59% was the mean for whites (Wong 2002).

half," or "a mixture."[16] Table 2 shows the results of comparing these 2 different measures of perceptions of the racial make-up of respondents' local communities. While Americans may not always give percentages that add up to 100% (Wong 2005a), our respondents do display an understanding of percentages generally: for example, for those who described their community as "mostly white," the estimates for %black in their community ranged from 1 to 50%. For those who thought their areas were "mostly black," they perceived their communities to be anywhere from 60 to 95% black. Estimates for the presence of whites look almost like mirror images.[17]

From Figures 3 and 4 and Tables 1 and 2, we can see respondents consistently overestimate the percentages of blacks and underestimate the percentages of whites living around them. It is also clear that their perceptions are more accurate and reasonable locally than nationally, which is similar to what Wong (2005a) found using the 2000 GSS data. She found that respondents' estimates of the different racial and ethnic groups in their local community were much more likely to add up to 100% than their national estimates, which on average ranged from 122% to 190%, depending on whether Hispanic and multiracial individuals were counted. More importantly, these findings cast doubt on the assumption crucial to power threat theory that individuals accurately perceive the demographic make-up of their surroundings.

The final issue to be addressed concerns the power threat theory's assumption that people's contexts are seen as threatening. After all, even if individuals knew where Census boundary lines were drawn and what the racial breakdowns for different areas were, the power threat theory rests on the idea that these local circumstances are seen as threatening. To test this assumption, we look at a number of questions about both respondents' neighborhoods and their communities.

Respondents were asked whether they believed the percentages of whites and blacks living in their communities and neighborhoods would change over the next 10 years, with a follow-up question as to whether the change – an increase or a decrease – would be a good thing or not. Table 3 shows the

[16] If a respondent answered "a mixture," she was asked to explain. We have not yet had a chance to code these responses.

[17] In the block groups sampled, the racial distribution is largely black and white. While there are small numbers of other minority groups present, it would be unsurprising if our respondents perceived only a biracial neighborhood.

results broken down by geographic locale, and for respondents' perceptions of their racial outgroup (i.e., we present whites' views about blacks and blacks' views about whites). The power threat theory only provides guidance about what to expect for white respondents, but we were interested in whether similar predictions could be made for blacks.

If blacks are seen as posing a threat, as predicted by power threat theory, then increases in the numbers of blacks should be seen as a bad thing. And, if blacks see whites as a threat (expanding the potential domain of power threat theory), then increasing numbers of whites should be seen as a threat. In other words, we should find a concentration of respondents in the upper right-hand quadrants for the table: increases in percentages of outgroup members will be seen as a bad or very bad thing. Instead, we find no such evidence, with very few respondents saying that increases in the numbers of outgroup members will be negative.

To tease out different reasons for why outgroup members could be seen as threatening, Table 4 presents the relationship between attitudes about communities and perceptions of their racial composition. The hypothesis suggested by the power threat theory is that people living in diverse communities will be seen as sharing fewer values or as failing to get along with one another. For Tables 4a and b, it is clear that living in more diverse communities does *not* lead respondents to think people in their community share different values. For example, while some white respondents who lived in communities they described as "mostly black" and "half white and half black" agreed that people in their community had conflicting values, even more who lived in "mostly white" communities also agreed. Tables 4c and d tell a similar story: the diversity of respondents' communities is not related to their beliefs about interpersonal conflict.

It is possible that threats are perceived at a much more localized level. Therefore Tables 5 and 6 look at the relationships between attitudes about respondents' neighborhoods and their perceptions of the racial make-up of those neighborhoods. (The perceptions are recoded into quartiles for ease of presentation.) Do respondents who believe they live with more members of their outgroup like their neighborhoods less? For black respondents, there is clearly no relationship. For whites, a quick look at

the table also suggests that just as many people like and dislike neighborhoods where they believe they are in the minority; while some white respondents who live in majority black block groups dislike their neighborhoods, just as many like living in areas with similar racial composition.

The relationship between perceived diversity and safety in a neighborhood is unclear. Among white respondents, the only person who said he felt "very worried" about his safety in his neighborhood was living in a neighborhood he perceived to be predominantly black. And, among those white respondents who felt "somewhat worried," more lived in neighborhoods with more blacks. However, there are about as many respondents who live in neighborhoods that are 50-75% black that are *not* worried, and among black respondents, several are also concerned about their safety in neighborhoods perceived to have higher percentages of black residents. Finally, it appears that both white and black respondents would consider moving from their neighborhoods to avoid ethnic/racial tension, and this is true for neighborhoods of various levels of diversity.

We have two considerations to raise in assessing these results: first, we are not controlling for the socio-economic status of the neighborhoods in these tables.[18] Second, perceptions of racial context may, in fact, be a reflection of people's fears for their safety. While we cannot tease apart the direction of causality with these simple tables, we do not believe they provide sufficient evidence in support of the assumption in power threat theory that context is viewed as a threatening circumstance. It is not at all clear that individuals understand their perceptions of their contexts to represent potential future harm (i.e. "threat") to themselves or others.

We are not trying to generalize from the findings we present here to the American public; not only do we have a very small sample size, it is not at all clear that the county we surveyed is representative of the nation. Nevertheless, the county is very near one of the most segregated cities in the nation (Farley 1999), and there is no reason to assume that it is atypical. The power threat theory, after all, is not tailored to apply to only a single locale. Therefore, while our analyses are based on only a pilot

[18] In future analyses, we plan to merge neighborhood- and community-level median income to our dataset.

study, we believe the findings point to a strong need to test the assumptions of power threat theory more assiduously.

Conclusion:

This paper is part of a larger project about racial and ethnic context. Some of the questions we plan to address are what the sources of people's perceptions of their surroundings are, how people's racial and ethnic identities interact with the contexts in which they live, and how different theories about contextual effects can be reconciled so that they can be applied more broadly across groups. Here, we focus on the assumptions upon which power threat theory rests, and our results cast doubt on the mechanism it describes, linking objective racial characteristics and political opinions and actions. In the next stage of the project, we plan to examine whether people's perceptions of their context are similar to Census numbers in their relationship with racial attitudes and policy preferences.

There are two possible outcomes of the overarching study, either of which will help advance scientific understanding of race relations in the United States. If peoples' perceptions of their contexts are related to objective measures, and these perceptions are related to racial attitudes and behaviors in the same way that objective measures are, then we will have provided a confirmatory test of the power threat theory as Blalock had modeled it. In future research, objective context measures can be used as acceptable proxies for respondents' perceptions, given that merging census data is easier and cheaper than asking respondents about perceptions of their racial and economic context at different geographic levels.

The second possibility, however, is that perceptions of context have little effect on racial attitudes, or that their effect is not the same as the effect of context. One possible explanation for the racial threat literature's past findings is that power threat theory works through elites, and that elites accurately perceive their contexts and mobilize their constituents without conveying demographic details and statistics. This possibility would open up new avenues for research on political leadership. The new results concerning ordinary Americans would be equally exciting. Respondents' misperceptions of their context may simply be nonattitudes, but if their estimates of larger minority populations are indeed related

to *less* prejudice and *more* support for policies to help Blacks, existing theories of racial attitudes would be hard-pressed to explain these results fully. If pictures fixed in people's heads do not match Census pictures, the practical implications extend beyond the confines of citizens' minds or the voting booth; the "fear of crime" literature in sociology has explained that personal and altruistic fear — regardless of accuracy — leads to purchases (e.g. guns, personal safety devices), behavioral changes (e.g. not going out at night, leaving lights on), and abandonment of areas (e.g. parks, industrial areas), particularly in metropolitan areas that are seen as dangerous (Warr and Ellison 2000). Scholars need to understand whether perceptions of community heterogeneity and interracial competition have equally serious consequences for political actions and outcomes.

The larger project will 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 of mean educational attainment (see, for example, Campbell et al. 2002 and Oliver and Mendelberg 2000), but what do these findings indicate? If a county that is 25 percent nonwhite is not perceived (i.e. seen) by individuals as 25 percent nonwhite (or, more importantly, 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. In addition, it is possible that people do not experience their counties, for example, especially in a state like California, where Los Angeles County has 9.8 million residents and many homogeneous neighborhoods and communities making up the diverse 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.[19] Our project will allow for tests of

[19] 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 their national, it leads one to wonder whether the tipping point is so low because whites overestimate the number of blacks living in their neighborhood.

the effects of different levels of context, and the potentially differing effects of objective and subjective indicators.

The overarching project also calls into question other research projects, not even focusing on racial 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 direct 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 attitudes and behaviors. Even if scholars find such effects, in order to interpret them properly, we need to understand the source of this information, the absorption of it, and the process by which the facts are understood and translated into political decisions.

Finally, this project has a wide range of policy implications, the most serious of which concerns the growing levels of ethnic diversity, not only in the United States, but in other nations as well. Israel, for example, has heeded (albeit unconsciously) the warnings of power threat theory by segregating Jews and Arabs. Writing about India, Varshney (2002) notes that not only are levels of diversity noteworthy, but also that levels of civic engagement and interaction between outgroups are a major determinant of ethnic conflict. In cities that are equally diverse, he finds that the level of conflict between Hindus and Muslims varies a great deal, depending on the level of inter- and intra-communal engagement. Finally, there is growing ethnic diversity in the EU, and different countries are searching for ways to incorporate and regulate immigrants; some allow migrants to live close to other co-ethnics, while other governments send the migrants to processing centers far from major metropolitan areas. Which policy is more conducive to acceptance and assimilation, as opposed to perceptions of threat and violence? A greater understanding of theories of ethnic and racial context (and their implications) will help political leaders develop policies that are most effective in diminishing the fears and threats that can be translated into violence, while weighing the costs of segregation.

D. References Cited

Amir, Y. 1969. "Contact Hypothesis in Ethnic Relations." *Psychological Bulletin* 71:319-342.

Blakely, Edward J. and Mary Gail Snyder. 1997. *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Blalock, Hubert M. 1967. *Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations*. New York: Wiley.

Bobo, Lawrence and Vincent L. Hutchings. 1994. "Race, the Sense of Group Position, and Immigration Politics." Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, New York, August, 1994.

Bobo, Lawrence and Vincent L. Hutchings. 1996. "Perceptions of Racial Group Competition: Extending Blumer's Theory of Group Position to a Multiracial Social Context." *American Sociological Review* 61 December:951-972.

Bowers, Jake. 1997. "Threat, Participation, an Mobilization: Crossburnings and Black Leadership in North Carolina, 1987-1997." Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting.

Bowers, Jake. 1998a. "Black Threat and Christian Fundamentalist Threat: A National Election Study 1997 Pilot Study Report." Pilot Study Report to the 1998 NES Planning Committee and NES Board.

Bowers, Jake. 1998b. "Measuring Perceptions of Black Threat: An Individual Level Test of the Power Threat Hypothesis." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Boston.

Cain, Bruce; Jack Citrin; and Cara Wong. 2000. *Ethnic Context and Racial Attitudes in California*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.

Campbell, Andrea, Cara Wong, and Jack Citrin. 2002. "`Racial Threat' and Direct Democracy: Contextual Effects in Three California Initiative." Manuscript.

Carsey, Thomas. 1995. "The Contextual Effects of Race on White Voter Behavior: The 1989 New York City Mayoral Election." *Journal of Politics* 57: 221-8.

Chiricos, Ted, Michael Hogan, and Marc Gertz. 1997. "Racial Composition of Neighborhood and Fear of Crime." *Criminology* 35: 107-31.

Chiricos, Ted, Ranee McEntire, and Marc Gertz. 2001. "Perceived Racial and Ethnic Composition of Neighborhood and Perceived Risk of Crime." *Social Problems* 48: 322-40.

Citrin, Jack; Green, Don; Muste, Chris; Wong, Cara. 1997. "Public Opinion toward Immigration Reform: The Role of Economic Motivations." *Journal of Politics* 59: 858-881.

Coulton, Claudia J., Jill Korbin, Tsui Chan, and Marilyn Su. 2001. "Mapping Residents' Perceptions of Neighborhood Boundaries: A Methodological Note." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 29: 371-383.

Delli Carpini, Michael X and Scott Keeter. 1997. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Duncan, Greg J. and Stephen W. Raudenbush. 1999. "Assessing the Effects of Context in Studies of Child and Youth Development." *Educational Psychologist* 34: 29-41.

Farley, Reynolds, Charlotte Steeh, Maria Krysan, Tara Jackson, and Keith Reeves. 1994. "Stereotypes and Segregation: Neighborhoods in the Detroit Area." *American Journal of Sociology* 100: 750-80.

Feldman, Stanley and Karen Stenner. 1994. "Order, Threat and Political Intolerance." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Fossett, Mark A. and K. Jill Kiecolt. 1989. "The Relative Size of Minority Populations and White Racial Attitudes." *Social Science Quarterly* 70 4:820-835.

Frey, William. 2002. "Migration Swings." *American Demography*, February 2002, 18-21.

Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gilens, Martin. 2001. “Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences.” *American Political Science Review* 95: 379-96.
Giles, Michael W. 1977. “Percent Black and Racial Hostility: An Old Assumption Reexamined.” *Social Science Quarterly* 58: 412-417.
Giles, Michael W. and Arthur S. Evans. 1985. “External Threat, Perceived Threat, and Group Identity.” *Social Science Quarterly* 66: 50-66.
Giles, Michael W. and Kaenan Hertz. 1994. “Racial Threat and Partisan Identification.” *American Political Science Review* 88 2:317-326.
Giles, Michael W. and Melanie A. Buckner. 1993. “David Duke and Black Threat: An Old Hypothesis Revisited.” *The Journal of Politics* 55:702-713.
Giles, Michael W. and Melanie A. Buckner. 1996. “Comment.” *The Journal of Politics* 58:1171-80.
Gladwell, Malcolm. 1995. “Fundamental Ignorance About Numbers.” *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, October 16-22, p.7.
Glaeser, Edward L. and Jacob L. Vigdor. 2001. “Racial Segregation in the 2000 Census: Promising News.” Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.
Glaser, James M. 1994. “Back to the Black Belt: Racial Environment and White Racial Attitudes in the South.” *The Journal of Politics* 56:21-41.
Grannis, Rick. 1998. “The Importance of Trivial Streets: Residential Streets and Residential Segregation.” *American Journal of Sociology* 103: 1530-64.
Green, Donald P, Dara Z. Strolovitch, and Janelle S. Wong. 1998. "Defended Neighborhoods, Integration, and Racially Motivated Crime," *American Journal of Sociology* 104: 372-403.
Green, Donald Philip and Lisa Michele Waxman. 1987. “Direct Threat and Political Tolerance: An Experimental Analysis of the Tolerance of Blacks toward Racists.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51: 149-165.
Heer, David M. 1959. “The Sentiment of White Supremacy: An Ecological Study.*” American Journal of Sociology* 64: 592-98.
Heeringa, Steve. 2002. “Strengths and weaknesses of two design options”. Personal Communication. August 13.
Hero, Rodney E. and Caroline J. Tolbert. 1996. “A Racial/Ethnic Diversity Interpretation of Politics and Policy in the States of the U.S.” *American Journal of Political Science* 40: 851-71.
Hetherington, Marc J. 1996. “The Media’s Role in Forming Voters’ National Economic Evaluations in 1992.” *American Journal of Political Science* 40: 372-95.
Highton, Benjamin and Raymond E. Wolfinger. 1992. “Estimating the Size of Minority Groups.” 1991 NES Pilot Study Report.
Hochschild, Jennifer L. 2001. “Where You Stand Depends on What You See: Connections among Values, Perceptions of Fact, and Political Prescriptions. In *Citizens and Politics,* ed. James H. Kuklinski. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 313-40.
Holbrook, Allyson L., Melanie C. Green, Jon A. Krosnick. “Telephone vs. Face-to-Face Interviewing of National Probability Samples With Long Questionnaires: Comparisons of Respondent Satisficing and Social Desirability Response Bias.” Manuscript. May, 2002
Huckfeldt, Robert. 1986. *Politics in Context: Assimilation and Conflict in Urban Neighborhoods.* New York: Agathon Press.
Huckfeldt, Robert and John Sprague. 1983. “Citizens, Contexts, and Politics.” In *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, ed. Ada W. Finifter. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 281-303.
Jencks, C. and S. Mayer. 1990. “The Social Consequences of Growing Up in a Poor Neighborhood.” In *Inner-city Poverty in the United States*, eds. L. Lynn and M. McGeary. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
Johnson, M., W. Phillips Shively, and R.M. Stein. 2002. “Contextual Data and the Study of Elections and Voting Behavior: Connecting Individuals to Environments.” *Electoral Studies* 21: 219-33.

Keech, William R. and Michael P. Sistrom. 1994. "North Carolina." *Quiet Revolution in the South: The Impact of the Voting Rights Act, 19665-1990.* ed. Chandler Davidson and Bernard Grofman. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. pp. 155-190.
Key, V.O. 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
Kinder, Donald R. and Lynn M. Sanders. 1996. *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Kinder, Donald R. and Tali Mendelberg. 1995. "Cracks in American Apartheid: The Political Impact of Prejudice Among Desegregated Whites." *Journal of Politics* 57:402-424.
Kinder, Donald R., Gordon S. Adams, and Paul W. Gronke. 1989. "Economics and Politics in the 1984 American Presidential Election." *American Journal of Political Science* 33: 491-515.
Kinder, Donald R. and D. Roderick Kiewiet. 1981. "Sociotropic Politics: The American Case." *British Journal of Political Science* 11: 129-61.
Kramer, Gerald H. 1983. "The Ecological Fallacy Revisited: Aggregate- versus Individual-level Findings on Economics and Elections, and Sociotropic Voting." *American Political Science Review* 77: 92-111.
Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. NY: The Free Press.
Liu, Baodong. 2001. "Racial Contexts and White Interests: Beyond Black Threat and Racial Tolerance." *Political Behavior* 23: 157-80.
Matei, Sorin, Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach, and Jack Linchuan Qiu. 2001. "Fear and Misperception of Los Angeles Urban Space." *Communication Research* 28: 429-63.
Matthews, Donald and James Prothro. 1966. *Negroes and the New Southern Politics*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World.
McAdam, Doug. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Miller, Joanne M., Jon A. Krosnick, and Laura Lowe. 2000. "The Impact of Policy Change Threat on Financial Contributions to Interest Groups." Manuscript, June 2000.
Mutz, Diana C. 1998. *Impersonal Influence: How Perceptions of Mass Collectives Affect Political Attitudes*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Nadeau, Richard and Richard G. Niemi. 1995. "Educated Guesses: The Process of Answering Factual Knowledge Questions in Surveys." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 59: 323-46.
Nadeau, Richard, Richard G. Niemi, and Jeffrey Levine. 1993. "Innumeracy About Minority Populations." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 57: 332-47.
Oliver, J. Eric, and Tali Mendelberg. 2000. "Reconsidering the Environmental Determinants of White Racial Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 44: 574-589.
Olzak, S; Shanahan S; McEneaney E. 1996. "Poverty, Segregation, and Race Riots - 1960 to 1993". *American Sociological Review* 61: 590-613.
Olzak, Susan. 1992. *The Dynamics of Ethnic Competition and Conflict.* Stanford, CA:Stanford University Press.
Pierce, John C., Nicholas P. Lovrich, and Russell J. Dalton. 2000. "Contextual Influences on Environmental Knowledge." *Environment and Behavior* 32: 188-208.
Prysby Charles L. 1989. "Attitudes of Southern Democratic Party Activists Toward Jesse Jackson: The Effects of the Local Context." *Journal of Politics* 51: 305-18.
Quillian, Lincoln. 1995. "Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat: Population Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe." *American Sociological Review* 60: 586-611.
Quillian, L. 1996. "Group Threat and Regional Change in Attitudes Toward African-Americans". *American Journal of Sociology* 102: 816-860.
Raudenbush, Stephen W., 1997. Statistical analysis and optimal design for cluster randomized trials. *Psychological Methods* 2 (2), 173–185.

Rosenstone, Steven J., Donald R. Kinder, Warren E. Miller, Virginia Sapiro, and the National Election Studies. NATIONAL ELECTION STUDIES, 1997: PILOT STUDY [dataset]. 1st release. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies [producer and distributor], 1998.
Rosenthal, R. 1994. "Parametric Measures of Effect Size". In H. Cooper & L.V. Hedges, Eds., *Handbook of Research Synthesis.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 231-244.
Sampson, Robert J., Jeffrey D. Morenoff, and Thomas Gannon-Rowley. 2002. "Assessing 'Neighborhood Effects': Social Processes and New Directions in Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 443-78.
Scheve, Kenneth and Matthew J. Slaughter. 2002. "Economic Insecurity and the Globalization of Production." Working manuscript.
Schmitt, Eric. 2001. "Segregation Growing Among U.S. Children." *New York Times*, May 6, 2001, A28.
Shamir, Michael and John Sullivan. 1983. "The Political Context of Tolerance: The United States and Israel." *American Political Science Review* 77:911-928.
Sigelman, Lee and Richard G. Niemi. 2001. "Innumeracy about Minority Populations: African Americans and Whites Compared." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 65: 86-94.
Smith, Tom W. 2001. *Intergroup Relations in a Diverse America: Data from the 2000 General Social Survey*. NY: The American Jewish Committee.
Stein, Robert M., Stephanie Shirley Post, and Allison L. Rinden. 2000. "Reconciling Context and Contact Effects on Racial Attitudes." *Political Research Quarterly* 53: 285-303.
Stoker, Laura and Jake Bowers. 2002. "Designing Multi-Level Studies: Sampling Voters and Electoral Contexts." *Electoral Studies.* 21(2):235-267.
Stoker, Laura and Jennifer Hochschild. 1997. "Egalitarianism in Context: A Proposal for the 2nd Multi-Investigator Study."
Taylor, Marylee C. 1998. "How White Attitudes Vary with the Racial Composition of Local Populations: Numbers Count." *American Sociological Review* 63: 512-35.
Taylor, Marylee C. 2000. "The Significance of Racial Context." In *Racialized Politics: The Debate about Racism in America,* eds. David O. Sears, Jim Sidanius, and Lawrence Bobo. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 118-36.
Tolnay, Stewart and E.M. Beck. 1989. "Black Lynchings: The Power Threat Hypothesis Revisited." *Social Forces* 67:605-623.
Tolnay, Stewart and E.M. Beck. 1995. *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
Tversky, Amos and Daniel Kahneman. 1974. "Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases." *Science* 185: 1124-31.
Varshney, Ashutosh. 2002. *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Voss, D. Stephen. 1996. "Beyond Racial Threat: Failure of an Old Hypothesis in the New South." *Journal of Politics* 58: 1156-70.
Warr, Mark and Christopher G. Ellison. 2000. "Rethinking Social Reactions to Crime: Personal and Altruistic Fear in Family Households." *American Journal of Sociology* 106: 551-78.
Welch, Susan, Lee Sigelman, Timothy Bledsoe, and Michael Combs. 2001. *Race & Place: Race Relations in an American City*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
Wong, Cara. 2002. "Are "Pictures in Our Heads" as Good as Maps?: The Relationship between Perceptions of Racial Context and Objective Context." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Political Science Association, Chicago.
_____. 2005a. "'Little' and 'Big' Pictures in Our Heads: Race, Local Context, and Innumeracy about Racial Groups in the U.S." Unpublished manuscript.
_____. 2005b. "Are "Pictures in Our Heads" as Good as Maps?: Questions about the Mechanism Linking Racial Context to Political Attitudes." Unpublished manuscript.
Wright, Gerald C. 1977. "Contextual Models of Electoral Behavior: The Southern Wallace Vote." *American Political Science Review* 71: 497-508.

Table 1:
Perceived vs. Objective Context

Table 1a: National

	Mean % Estimated for US Population	2000 Census % of US Population	% Difference
White	58	75	-17
Black	30	12	18

Table 1b: Community

	Mean % Estimated for Local Communities	Mean % of Local Communities (2000 Census)	Mean of Individual-Level Differences
White	50	63	-13
Black	41	26	15

Table 1c: Neighborhood

	Mean % Estimated for Block Groups	Mean % of Block Groups (2000 Census)	Mean of Individual-Level Differences
White	48	53	-5
Black	44	35	9

Table 2:
Two Measures of Perceived Community Context

	Range for % Black Estimated for Local Community	Mean % Black Estimated	Range for % White Estimated for Local Community	Mean % White Estimated
Mostly White	1 to 50	25	40 to 99	64
Half and Half	30 to 60*	45	25 to 70	51
Mostly Black	60 to 95	75	2 to 40	19
Mixture	18 to 85	37	10 to 90	52

*dropping 2 outliers at 10 and 95

Table 3
Are Changes in %Outgroup seen as a Good or Bad Thing?

Community

Changes in %Black in local community in next 10 years (White Rs)

	very good thing	good thing	neither good nor bad	bad thing	very bad thing
increase a lot	0	0	1	1	0
increase a little	1	2	12	2	0
stay the same	1	3	7	0	0
decrease a little	0	3	3	1	0
decrease a lot	0	0	0	0	0

Changes in %White in local community in next 10 years (Black Rs)

	very good thing	good thing	neither good nor bad	bad thing	very bad thing
increase a lot	0	2	0	0	0
increase a little	1	1	3	1	0
stay the same	1	1	2	1	0
decrease a little	0	6	2	0	0
decrease a lot	0	0	0	0	0

Neighborhood

Changes in %Black in block group in next 10 years (White Rs)

	very good thing	good thing	neither good nor bad	bad thing	very bad thing
increase a lot	0	0	0	2	0
increase a little	0	1	11	0	0
stay the same	0	3	9	3	0
decrease a little	0	2	2	2	0
decrease a lot	0	0	0	0	0

Changes in %White in block group in next 10 years (Black Rs)

	very good thing	good thing	neither good nor bad	bad thing	very bad thing
increase a lot	0	1	1	0	0
increase a little	1	3	1	0	0
stay the same	0	0	4	0	0
decrease a little	0	3	2	0	0
decrease a lot	0	1	0	0	0

Table 4
Do People Share Fewer Values in Diverse Communities?

4a: People in this community do not share the same values (White Rs)

	strongly agree	agree	neither	disagree	strongly disagree
Mostly White	0	5	9	7	0
Half and Half	0	2	0	3	1
Mostly Black	0	2	2	0	0
Mixture	0	0	2	4	0

4b: People in this community do not share the same values (Black Rs)

	strongly agree	agree	neither	disagree	strongly disagree
Mostly White	0	0	1	5	0
Half and Half	0	1	1	2	0
Mostly Black	0	2	2	4	0
Mixture	0	1	1	1	0

Do People in Diverse Communites Fail to Get Along?

4c: People in this community generally don't get along with each other (White Rs)

	strongly agree	agree	neither	disagree	strongly disagree
Mostly White	0	0	0	20	1
Half and Half	0	0	0	5	1
Mostly Black	0	1	0	3	0
Mixture	0	0	0	6	0

4d: People in this community generally don't get along with each other (black Rs)

	strongly agree	agree	neither	disagree	strongly disagree
Mostly White	0	0	0	4	2
Half and Half	0	1	0	2	1
Mostly Black	0	1	0	6	1
Mixture	1	0	0	2	0

Table 5
Are Diverse Neighborhoods Liked Less?

5a: Do you like this neighborhood as a place to live? (White Rs)

	like it a lot	like it	dislike it	dislike it a lot
0-25% black	10	6	0	0
25-50% black	7	5	0	0
50-75% black	0	4	1	1
75-100% black	0	0	1	0

5b: Do you like this neighborhood as a place to live? (Black Rs)

	like it a lot	like it	dislike it	dislike it a lot
0-25% black	3	2	0	0
25-50% black	2	2	1	0
50-75% black	2	2	0	1
75-100% black	1	5	0	0

Are Diverse Neighborhoods Seen as Less Safe?

5c: How worried are you about your safety in your neighborhood? (White Rs)

	very worried	somewhat worried	not very worried	not at all worried
0-25% black	0	1	9	7
25-50% black	0	2	6	4
50-75% black	0	4	2	1
75-100% black	1	0	0	0

5d: How worried are you about your safety in your neighborhood? (Black Rs)

	very worried	somewhat worried	not very worried	not at all worried
0-25% black	0	0	2	3
25-50% black	1	0	2	2
50-75% black	0	3	2	0
75-100% black	0	2	2	2

Table 6
Reason to Move?

Reason you might want to move from this neighborhood (white Rs):
To be somewhere with less ethnic/racial tension

	yes	no
0-25% black	1	16
25-50% black	2	10
50-75% black	3	4
75-100% black	1	0

Reason you might want to move from this neighborhood (black Rs):
To be somewhere with less ethnic/racial tension

	yes	no
0-25% black	2	3
25-50% black	0	5
50-75% black	2	3
75-100% black	2	4

Figure 1

Blalock's Power Threat Theory

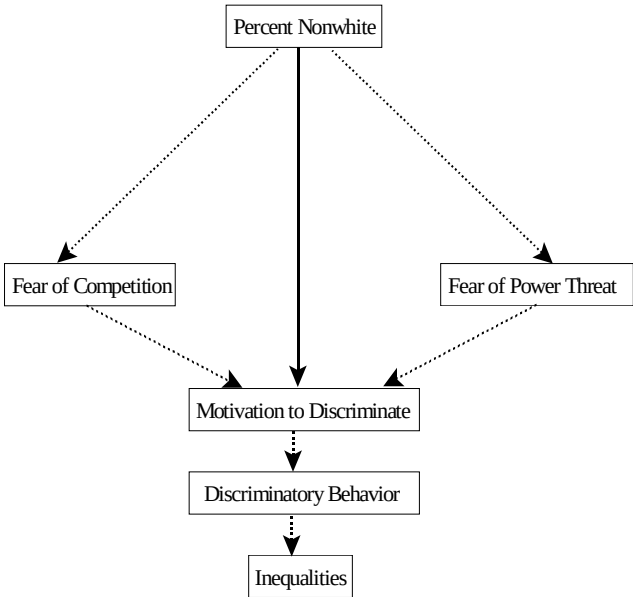
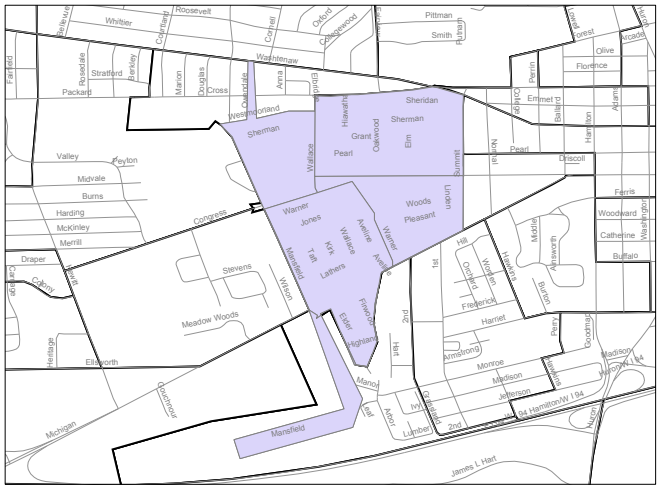
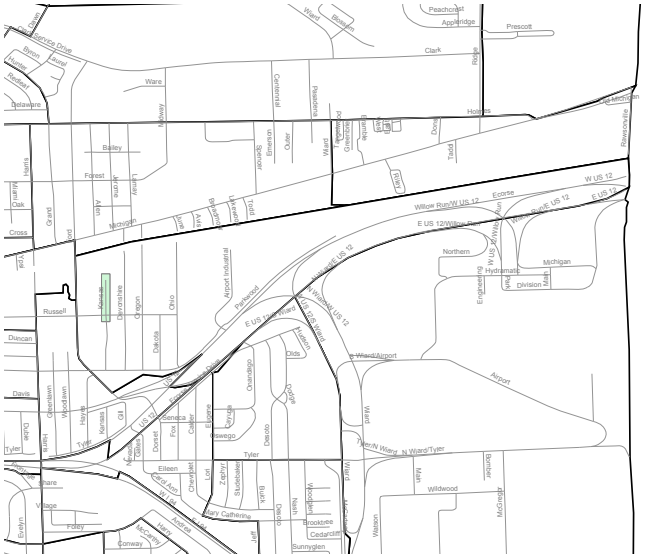
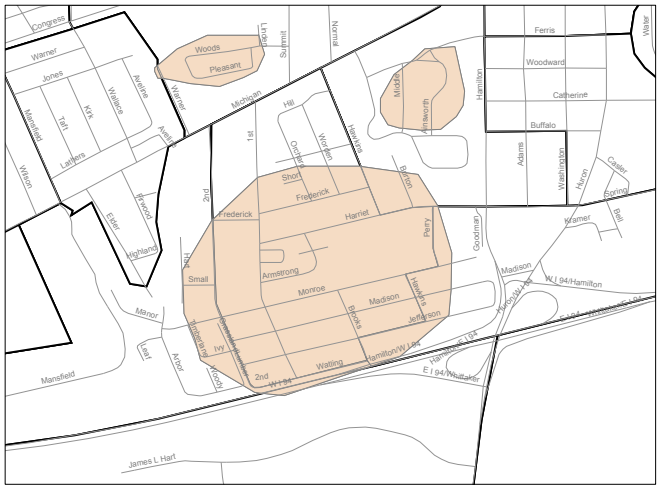


Figure 2

“Local Communities” Drawn on the Small Map







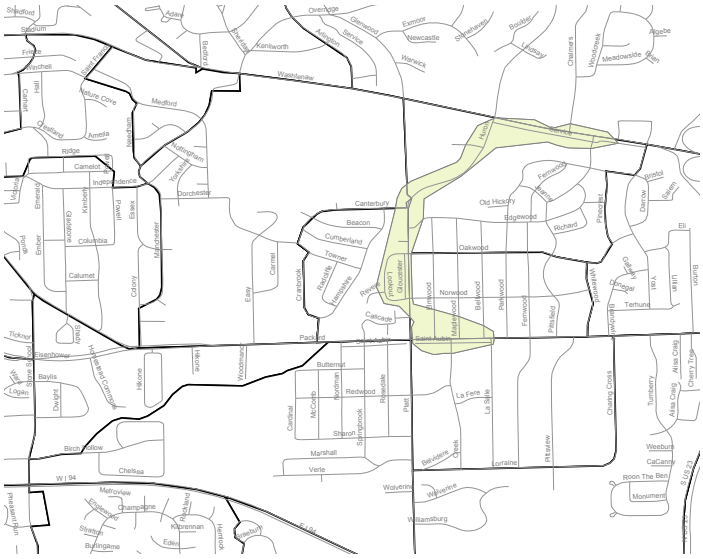
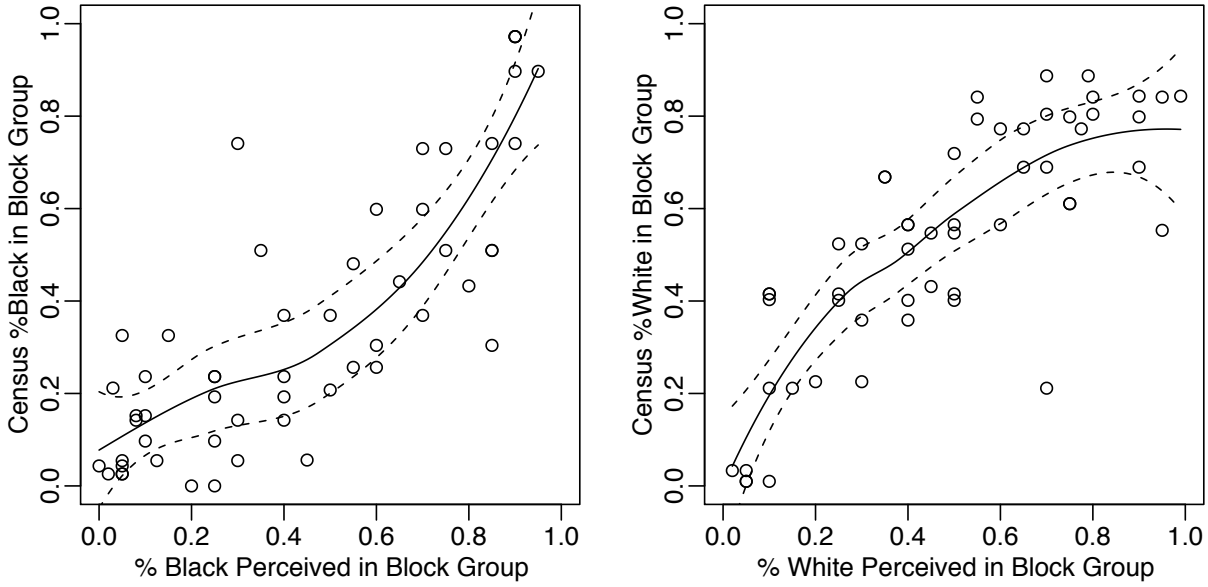


Figure 3

“Local Communities” Drawn on the Big Map

Figure 4

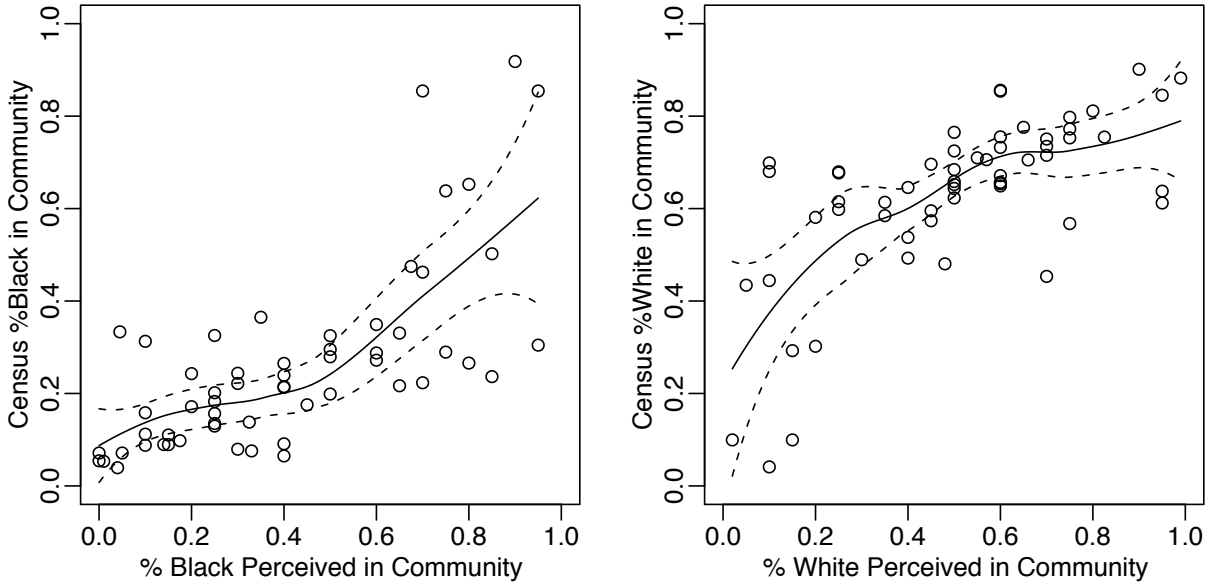
Objective versus Subjective Context at the Block Group Level



Note: Solid lines are quadratic local regressions with a nearest neighbor bandwidth of 2/3. Dashed lines show pointwise 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 5

Objective versus Subjective Context at the Community Level



Note: Solid lines are quadratic local regressions with a nearest neighbor bandwidth of 2/3. Dashed lines show pointwise 95% confidence intervals.