PLAYING THE RACE CARD IN THE POST–WILLIE HORTON ERA
THE IMPACT OF RACIALIZED CODE WORDS ON SUPPORT FOR PUNITIVE CRIME POLICY

JON HURWITZ
University of Pittsburgh
MARK PEFFLEY
University of Kentucky

Abstract   To date, little is known about the precise impact of racially coded words and phrases. Instead, most of what we know about racialized messages comes from studies that focus on pictorial racial cues (for example, the infamous "Willie Horton" ad) or on messages with an extensive textual narrative that is laced with implicit racial cues. Because in a "post-Horton" era strategic use of racially coded words will often be far more subtle than those explored in past studies, we investigate the power of a single phrase believed by many to carry strong racial connotations: "inner city." We do so by embedding an experiment in a national survey of whites, where a random half of respondents was asked whether they support spending money for prisons (versus antipoverty programs) to lock up "violent criminals," while the other half was asked about "violent *inner city* criminals." Consistent with the literature on issue framing, we find that whites' racial attitudes (for example, racial stereotypes) were much more important in shaping preferences for punitive policies when they receive the racially coded, "inner city" question. Our results demonstrate how easy it is to continue "playing the race card" in the post–Willie Horton era, as well as some of the limits of such framing effects among whites with more positive racial attitudes.

In 1994, during the House debate on the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Bill supported by President Bill Clinton, House Republicans

seized on a minor provision of the legislation that designated block grants for midnight basketball programs, which were designed to provide recreational activities for inner-city youth. Even though the basketball line item represented less than two-hundredths of 1 percent of the bill's expenditures (the majority of which were earmarked for punitive anticrime measures), 29 Republican legislators spoke derisively about midnight basketball on the House floor between August 3 and August 21 before the bill's passage, characterizing the program as "hugs for thugs." A few Democrats charged Republicans with "playing the race card," or using coded language to racialize the bill. Knowing that the American public sees professional basketball as a sport played overwhelmingly by African-Americans, Republicans, according to Democrats, attempted to portray the legislation as something to coddle black, inner-city youth.

This example neatly raises the central issue of the present inquiry: to what degree does such language affect the audience's expression of support for the policy? While numerous studies have investigated the impact of racially coded language on candidate preferences and vote intentions (Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002) and on a slew of race-related policy attitudes, little is known about the power of such language to affect policy attitudes in the one domain in which, intuitively, it should have its most profound impact—crime.[1] To the degree that citizens conflate race and crime, and to the extent that individuals consider crime to be highly salient, politicians can be expected to manipulate public attitudes by injecting race into this very emotional arena.

Public debate pursuant to "playing the race card" began with the airing of the infamous "Willie Horton" ad, run by the National Security Political Action Committee (NSPAC) against Democrat Michael Dukakis during the 1988 presidential campaign. As meticulously detailed by Jamieson (1992, pp. 15–42), the narrator of the spot states that Willie Horton, a convicted murderer, received multiple weekend furlough passes from prison, during the last of which, the narrator informs us, he "fled, kidnapping a young couple, stabbing the man and repeatedly raping his girlfriend." While the ad could have conveyed exactly the same information without graphics, NSPAC elected to superimpose the most menacing possible picture of Horton, an African-American, over the narrative.

Tali Mendelberg (2001) convincingly argues that the Horton ad is effective because of its implicitness. White Americans, despite their resentment toward blacks, are committed to a "norm of equality," which causes them to reject blatantly racial appeals, but not those that are implicit—that is, those not recognized as racial. The NSPAC spot fulfills the implicitness requirement in the sense that it never explicitly mentions that the subject is African-American,

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1. Mendelberg (2001) found that exposure to news about the Willie Horton ad, used during the 1988 presidential campaign, strengthened the connection between racial attitudes and opposition to economic policies (e.g., welfare), but not crime policy.

nor does it make an explicit linkage between candidate Dukakis, his policies, and the black recipient (Horton) of his policy.

We believe that the Horton ad has made it more difficult to play the race card in campaigns. Put differently, it may have helped transform what Mendelberg terms an "implicit" appeal into a more explicit appeal that would, doubtless, be recognized for its blatant racial component today.[2] While, technically, the NSPAC commercial may have been implicit, racialized content can be, and in the future is likely to be, far more subtle and implicit. Valentino, Hutchings, and White (2002) demonstrate convincingly that race-related pictures that are *far* more subtle than that in the Horton spot can strongly influence both individuals' racial policy positions and their candidate preferences.

One must wonder if the norm of political correctness and the fear of being accused of racialization have driven racial appeals even further underground, possibly to the point where virtually *any* presentation of race—in audible or printed narrative or in pictures—has become practically verboten. If so, the racialization of politics will increasingly take place mainly at the level of code words, or words that are fundamentally nonracial in nature that have, through the process of association, assumed a strong racial component. Martin Gilens (1996), for example, has argued that "welfare" is one such word.

To date, little is known about the impact of racially coded words and phrases. Instead, most of what we know about racialized messages comes from studies whose major focus is on pictorial racial cues (for example, Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002) or an extensive textual narrative (for example, a political ad or news segment) that is laced with implicit racial cues (Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002). However, we presuppose that modern battles will be far less obvious in nature and will rely instead on the subtle introduction of strategic words or phrases with racial connotations.

What follows is a systematic analysis of the impact of a phrase believed by many to carry strong racial connotations: "inner city." After discussing the cognitive process by which racial coding may be effective, we use a survey experiment embedded within the 2001 National Race and Crime Survey to examine not only how this phrase influences individuals' beliefs about anti-crime policies but also, and more important, how they reach their decisions regarding these policies. We undertake this analysis precisely because the implications of coding are, to the degree that the technique succeeds, both frightening and potentially pervasive.

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2. For example, even though crime and prison furloughs were featured in political ads in statewide and national election campaigns in 1994, the ads avoided any reference (pictorial or otherwise) to race because "[candidates knew that if they did] they'd spend weeks responding to the counterattack" (Kurtz 1994).

Group-Centric Framing

Studies of issue framing (Druckman 2001; Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Nelson and Kinder 1996) demonstrate that frames affect opinions by making certain considerations (for example, values, predispositions, groups) seem more important than others, thus affecting the way people judge the issue. If, for example, a narrative about a Ku Klux Klan rally is framed as a story about First Amendment rights (rather than as a matter of public order), then individuals are more likely to base their decision to tolerate such a rally on their support for civil liberties, while they are more likely to base their decision on concerns for public order if the same story is framed in terms of safety (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997). In essence, framing not only creates a tighter linkage between the consideration and the policy attitude, but it also elevates the importance of the consideration as a decisional criterion.

According to Nelson and Kinder (1996, pp. 1055–56), "Public opinion on matters of government policy is group-centric: shaped in powerful ways by the attitudes citizens possess toward the social groups they see as the principal beneficiaries (or victims) of the policy." They further argue that framing is particularly effective at heightening group-centrism—or the tendency to base policy decisions on the group given prominence in the frame. Not surprisingly, then, recent research has linked support for ostensibly nonracial policies, such as welfare (Gilens 1999; Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman 1997) and crime (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Hurwitz and Peffley 1997; Peffley and Hurwitz 2002) to attitudes toward African-Americans.

As noted, at least in the racial domain, framing may be less effective as a determinant of group-centric policy judgments when it is explicit (Mendelberg 2001). Unfortunately, virtually all of the growing literature from both the framing and priming paradigms has examined the power of either extensive textual narratives, such as 30-second "spot" ads, or visuals to frame a message in a particular way.[3] We also maintain that modern politics in the United States has seen an increase in more subtle means to frame racial messages. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the power of single words or phrases that have no explicit racial content.

Our method, more specifically, involves asking respondents about the preferred way to prevent crime (spending money for prisons or for antipoverty programs), while randomly asking one-half about "violent criminals" and the other half about "violent *inner-city* criminals." In our analysis, the following question serves as the independent variable:

> Some people want to increase spending for new prisons to lock up violent [inner-city/xxx] criminals. Other people would rather spend this money for antipoverty programs to prevent crime. What about you? If you had to choose, would you

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3. On framing, see Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997; Nelson and Kinder 1996; Nelson and Oxley 1999. On priming, see Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002.

rather see this money spent on building new prisons, or on antipoverty programs? Do you feel strongly or not very strongly about this?

Notably, the frame manipulation is restricted to a single phrase: "inner-city." Because everything else in the question is identical, any differences between the control and treatment groups can only be attributed to the inclusion of the inner-city frame.

Based on the framing literature, and more specifically on that which delves into the question of group-centric framing (Nelson and Kinder 1996), we anticipate finding two differences between experimental groups. First, we expect the frame to alter the evaluative criteria by which respondents select their preferred policy. Given the modern association between inner cities and African-Americans in the minds of many individuals,[4] those in the racially coded, inner-city frame should be more likely to base their policy decisions on their evaluations of African-Americans (H_1). Second, we expect more punitive responses (use the money for prisons) from white respondents in the racially coded, inner-city condition, at least to the degree that they view African-Americans, who are the presumptive inhabitants of inner cities, negatively (H_2). There is ample evidence that many whites who hold racially prejudicial views favor harsher responses to crime when the criminals are identified as black (Hurwitz and Peffley 1997). When the policy is framed with racial connotations, therefore, we can expect these respondents' attitudes to become more punitive.

We underscore the subtlety of the frame in this experiment, which is precisely why we consider it to be the appropriate methodology in the post-Horton era. We cannot, of course, claim that the inner-city frame is the most subtle of all possible racial frames, as evidenced by our finding (see footnote 4) that many clearly equate the inner city with blacks. Doubtless, media consultants will introduce increasingly clever and subtle racial language to future campaigns. However, the frame is, by definition, implicit inasmuch as there is no explicit mention or graphic representation of race. Mendelberg (2001, p. 11) defines an implicitly racial appeal as one that "contains a recognizable—if subtle—racial reference, most easily through visual references." Surely, our frame is far more implicit than a visual reference and far more subtle than some of the other so-called implicit, racially coded phrases, such as "welfare queens." We also believe the frame is substantially more implicit than the frames embedded in either pictures or in extensive narratives that have been studied by others, if only because the race in these other studies is obvious to the audience. Not only is our approach more realistic, given the climate in which more obvious forms of racialization are likely to backfire, but it is also

4. Respondents in the National Race and Crime Survey were asked to guess the percentage of all Americans living in the inner city who are African-American; the median guess was 60 percent, a much higher figure than the actual percentage of residents of central cities who are African-American, which was 20 percent in 1990, according to the U.S. Census.

more potentially frightening to the degree that our expectations are confirmed. For if this simple phrase is found to effectively frame responses to the crime problem, we will know how easily public opinion can be shaped.

Analysis

DATA AND MEASURES

The data for the analysis are drawn from the sample of (non-Hispanic) whites in the National Race and Crime Survey, a nationwide random digit dial (RDD) telephone survey administered by the Survey Research Center (SRC) at the University of Pittsburgh between October 19, 2000, and March 1, 2001. Interviews were completed with a total of 602 white respondents, for an overall response rate (response rate 3) of 48.64 percent (American Association for Public Opinion Research [AAPOR] 2004, p. 31).[5] To conserve space on the survey, the experiment described below was randomly administered to half of the white sample ($N = 290$). Further details on the sample are available from the authors on request.[6]

Dependent Measure. Responses to the crime policy question are assessed on a 4-point scale ranging from strongly preferring new prisons (point 1) to strongly preferring antipoverty programs (point 4) as the best way to deal with crime.

Racial Attitudes. We included two sets of racial attitudes in the survey: stereotypes of African-Americans (Black Stereotypes) and beliefs about racial discrimination in the criminal justice system (Racial Fairness). Whites who accept negative stereotypes of African-Americans–viewing them as lazy, violent, and dishonest—should be more likely to prefer the punitive policy option in the inner-city condition. Accordingly, our measure of Black Stereotypes is an additive index (ranging from 5 to 35) of the extent to which whites rate "most blacks" negatively on five, 7-point trait scales (see appendix, items 1–5).

Our index of Racial Fairness—the second racial attitudes variable—was created by adding responses to four items that assessed whether the police or the courts "in your community" treat blacks less fairly than they treat whites (see appendix items, 6 and 7a–c). The resulting scale ranges from 4 (very unfair) to 23 (very fair). Whites who continue to deny that blacks are treated unfairly by the police and the courts—in spite of an abundance of evidence to the contrary (Lauritsen and Sampson 1998; Walker, Spohn, and DeLone

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5. The survey data are scheduled to be deposited at Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).

6. The study also included a sample ($N = 579$) of African-American respondents who were not used in this analysis, in part because there was virtually no variation in responses to the dependent measure among African-Americans, who overwhelmingly rejected the prison option regardless of experimental condition.

2000)—are likely to favor punitive measures to control violent inner-city crime because, in their view, the higher crime rate of African-Americans is due more to the failings of blacks than to the justice system, which they view as imminently fair and color-blind.

Control Variables. We include a range of controls in the analysis to guard against the possibility that racial attitudes are tied to crime policy preferences due to their association with other, spurious factors.[7] Most important in this regard are two controls designed to serve as baselines against which the racial attitudes variables can be compared: White Stereotypes and General Fairness. White Stereotypes is assessed over the same five traits as Black Stereotypes, but in reference to "most whites." In contrast to the Racial Fairness scale, the two items assessing the General Fairness of the criminal justice system make no reference to race (appendix, items 8 and 9). In addition, because racial attitudes are associated with punitiveness, or a desire to punish those who break the rules (Hurwitz and Peffley 1992), we included such a measure (Punitiveness) as a control (see appendix, items 10 and 11), as well as Fear of Crime (appendix, items 12 and 13), which is often associated with a desire to punish criminals (Ferraro 1995).

Other political orientations (Ideology, Party Identification, and Equality) and social demographic factors (education, gender, age, income, and residing in the South) may also shape crime policy attitudes and thus are also included as controls (see the appendix for details about the measurement of the Equality and the demographic control variables).[8]

To test our hypotheses, we regressed Anticrime Policy Preferences on the predictor variables, a dummy variable representing the question frame (coded 1 for inner-city reference and 0 otherwise), and interactions for each of the predictors and question frame, using ordered probit analysis.[9] The regression results are displayed in table 1. The first two columns of coefficients provide the estimates for the model without the reference to the inner cities (when question frame = 0), and the second two columns give the computed coefficients for the model with the inner-city reference. As the coefficients in the left-hand side of the table make clear, racial attitudes (black stereotypes and racial fairness) have no discernible impact on crime policy preferences when no reference is made to inner-city criminals. The effects of black stereotypes and racial fairness are tiny and are far from being statistically significant. Rather, whites' preferences for fighting crime in the baseline (no inner city)

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7. It is ordinarily considered unessential with an experimental design to incorporate control variables. In this case, however, it is important to be able to demonstrate that racial attitudes are more responsive to racial coding than other variables and that the effects of racial attitudes are not due to their association with other variables that might be affected by coded language.

8. Ideology and Partisanship are both measured in the standard way, ranging from "strong conservative" (Republican) at point 1 to "strong liberal" (Democrat) at point 7.

9. Rather than assume that the effects of the nonracial variables must be constant across question frame, we allowed the effects of all predictors—racial and otherwise—to vary across the experimental conditions.

Table 1. Predicting Whites' Crime Policy Preferences across Question Frames

	No Inner-City Reference		Inner-City Reference (Computed)	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Racial Attitudes				
Black Stereotype	.009	.028	−.081**[a]	.030
Racial Fairness	−.020	.031	−.144**[a]	.032
Control Variables				
General Fairness	.045	.077	.129	.093
White Stereotype	−.027	.028	.041	.035
Equality	.081	.086	−.136	.097
Punitiveness	−.252**	.103	−.318**	.109
Fear of Crime	.186	.124	.007	.132
Ideology	.070	.082	−.134	.091
Party Identification	−.203**	.076	.005[a]	.078
Education	.035	.089	.159	.114
Gender	.780**	.247	.250	.289
Age	−.017	.008	−.007	.009
Income	−.096	.092	−.269**	.100
South	−.066	.254	−.381	.304
Question Frame (Inner city = 1)	3.437	1.984		
Interactions with Frame				
Black Stereotype × Frame	−.090*	.041		
Racial Fairness × Frame	−.124**	.045		
Intercept 1	−.451	1.444		
Intercept 2	−.057	1.444		
Intercept 3	.609	1.443		
N	250			
Pseudo R^2	.196			

NOTE.—Entries are ordered probit coefficients, with standard errors. Higher values on the above variables indicate the following: favor spending on antipoverty programs versus prisons, more negative stereotypes, justice system is racially fair, justice system is generally fair, egalitarian, fear of crime, punitive, conservative, Republican, female, older, higher income, residing in the South, and the question frame contained the inner-city reference.

[a] Coefficients are statistically different across experimental conditions at the .05 level.

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

condition are a function of more traditional determinants of crime policy attitudes—partisanship, gender, and punitiveness. As one might expect, Republicans, males, and those with more punitive orientations are significantly more likely to favor fighting crime by building more prisons than by spending money on antipoverty programs.

When the frame of the question is altered by inserting the phrase "inner city," however, policy preferences are driven by very different evaluative criteria. Consistent with our expectation (H_1), when whites are asked about locking up violent *inner-city* criminals, their policy preferences are based much more strongly on their racial attitudes. Not only are the coefficients for black stereotypes and racial fairness significantly larger in the racially coded (than the baseline) condition, but their impact in the coded condition is significant beyond the .01 level (coefficients in the right-hand side of the table). And consistent with the second hypothesis, when crime is framed as a racially coded issue, whites who endorse negative racial stereotypes and who view the justice system as racially fair are much more likely to favor punitive (building prisons) versus preventive (antipoverty) policies as the solution to fight crime.

To gain a better understanding of the impact of the two racial attitudes, we display in figure 1 the predicted probabilities of whites who favor new prisons for the two experimental conditions across both the black stereotype variable (the top portion of the figure) and the racial fairness variable (the bottom portion of the figure).[10] As the figures make plain, the impact of the racial variables is essentially nonexistent when no reference is made to inner cities; the plots are basically flat in the control condition. In the racially coded condition, however, the probability of favoring punitive measures to fight crime increases dramatically among whites who are more accepting of racial stereotypes or who believe the justice system is racially fair. Moreover, while the percentage of whites favoring prisons is uniformly low in the control condition (ranging from 14 percent to 25 percent), in the inner-city condition the punitive option is preferred by a fairly large percentage of whites with extremely negatives views of African-Americans (50 percent and 80 percent, respectively, of whites at the extremes of the racial fairness and black stereotype scales).

The figure also suggests that racial liberals as well as racial conservatives react differently to the two policy frames.[11] While, as expected, racial conservatives (those on the right-hand side of the two racial attitude scales) are *more* likely to endorse punitive crime policies in the treatment versus control conditions,

10. Predicted probabilities were generated for favoring prisons (either strongly or not so strongly) based on the ordered probit results in the first two columns of coefficients in table 1 using the Spost program developed by Long and Freese for Stata 7.0 (2001). Probabilities are computed by varying the racial attitude variable, holding other predictors in table 1 constant at their sample means and setting gender to male.
11. We use these terms only as a shorthand suggesting that racial conservatives hold more negative racial stereotypes and are more likely to deny that the justice system discriminates against African-Americans.
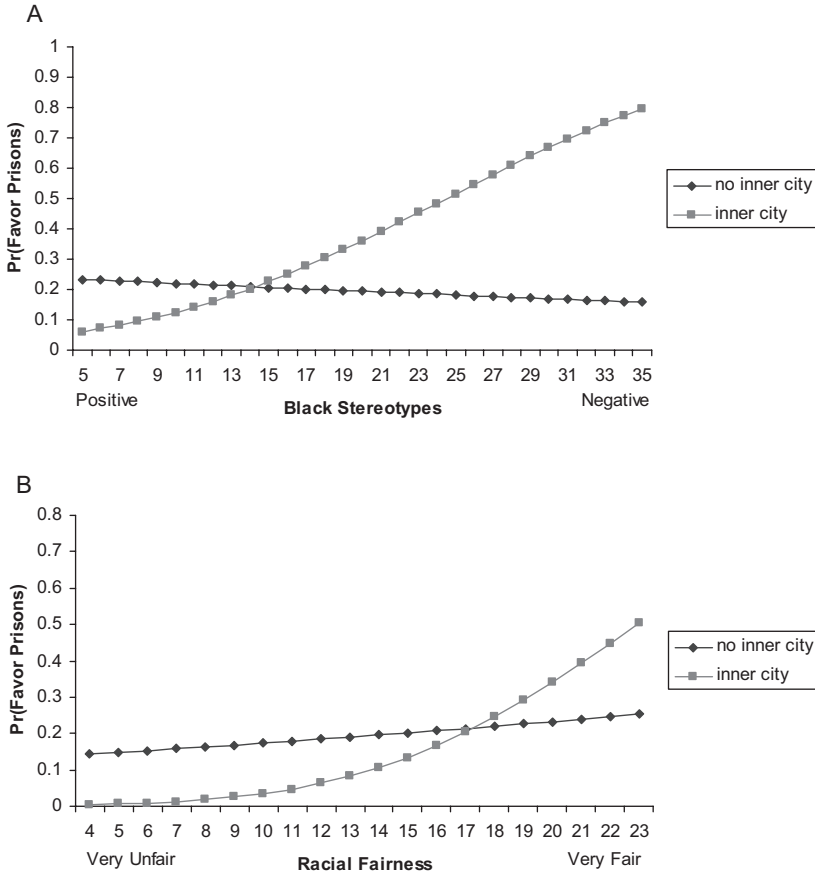
A

B

Figure 1. Predicted probabilities across racial attitudes (based on table 1). Probability in favor of prisons across black stereotypes by inner-city reference, whites (A). Probability in favor of prisons across racial fairness by inner-city reference, whites (B).

we also find that racial liberals (those at the left end of the racial attitudes scales) are *less* likely to endorse punitive crime policies in the inner-city condition. Although the differences across conditions appear larger, overall, for racial conservatives (especially for the black stereotype scale), racial liberals are also affected by the frame. Their support for the punitive option in the inner-city frame is close to 0 percent. Thus, the use of the racially coded phrase, "inner city," appears to be as much of a cue to racial liberals to reject punitive solutions as it is to conservatives to endorse them.

Conclusions

This analysis has been designed to address, in the most specific fashion possible, racialized code words in modern political discourse. The findings, we believe, are highly informative in a number of different ways. Most generally, they are fully consistent with, and add to, the literature on issue framing—particularly the literature focusing on the group-centric nature of a frame (Nelson and Kinder 1996). When messages are framed in such a way to reinforce the relationship between a particular policy and a particular group, it becomes far more likely that individuals will evaluate the policy on the basis of their evaluations of the group.

From our results, it apparently does not take much to reinforce this relationship—at least in the racial domain. Because of the very simple experimental design employed, in which differences between the inner-city and the baseline group can only be attributed to the introduction of the code word, it seems clear that respondents who think about criminals from the inner city have been encouraged to evaluate anticrime policies on the basis of the group that they associate with inner cities—African-Americans. As such, these respondents are far more likely (relative to those in the baseline group) to link their policy preferences to their feelings toward blacks.

This result is chilling in its implications, for it demonstrates how easily opinion can be manipulated and, more specifically, how easy it can be to "play the race card." As we argued at the outset, one of the legacies of the Willie Horton ad, and its ensuing discussion, may have been to make it more difficult to manipulate opinion with blatantly racialized messages. Most likely, such a message would, today, be either unproductive or counterproductive because, as a number of studies suggest, implicit appeals are much more effective. We have carried implicitness to its extreme: we have used no visuals, no mention of race, and no mention of characteristics often associated with race (like "welfare queens"). Still, we have found a way to encourage respondents to evaluate government policies on the basis of racial beliefs instead of, say, partisanship. While our research has focused on policy preferences, we see no reason why we would not obtain the same results if we focused on candidate preferences—a topic for future analysis.

Clearly, racially coded language can affect citizens' political judgments in insidious ways. At the same time, however, our results also suggest that people are not likely to be helpless victims of elites' attempts to manipulate public opinion through the use of racial code words. Although we found that a reference to inner-city criminals pushed racial conservatives to more punitive policy preferences, racial liberals moved in the opposite direction, favoring more preventive (in this case, antipoverty) policies, when asked about criminals in the inner city. Racial liberals thus appear to resist even the most subtle racial appeals. Our findings on this score are consistent with studies that show that framing does not affect political judgments in a mindless way but works through a psychological process in which individuals consciously and deliberately think about the relative importance of different considerations suggested by

a frame (Nelson and Oxley 1999). Thus, while our findings provide ample evidence of the power of racial coding to affect citizens' judgments, they are also consistent with recent studies that demonstrate that there are limits to the ability of elites to use frames to manipulate mass opinion (Druckman 2001).

One reason for confidence in our findings is that the wording of the crime policy question in the survey experiment was designed to provide a conservative test of the power of the inner-city phrase to lift white support for the building of new prisons. Had we simply offered respondents a one-sided question with no alternative to the punitive option, the racial coding frame would undoubtedly have increased support for new prisons beyond what we observed in our experiment. However, by employing a two-sided question format where respondents were offered a choice between punitive and preventive (antipoverty) policy options, resulting responses are not only more valid but are presumably less influenced by framing effects than if respondents had been asked to agree (or disagree) with, say, a single Likert statement. Still, even under these circumstances—circumstances designed to discourage susceptibility to framing—we find it relatively easy to push people to base their policy preferences on racial beliefs. And we find it relatively easy to push racial conservatives to become proponents of more punitive strategies.

Our findings also have important implications for studies of media framing of news stories on violent crime that take place in the inner city. As numerous content analysis studies have shown, journalists are not only more likely to disproportionately portray violent crime as perpetrated by black males, but such stories are also much more likely to be set in the inner city, in part because of the closer proximity of crime scenes to urban news organizations (Entman and Rojecki 2001; Gilens 1999). Our results suggest that even if blacks are not portrayed in news stories, the inner-city setting of the story is likely to provide an implicit racial frame for the story, thus reinforcing the connection between race and crime in the minds of many whites (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Peffley, Shields, and Williams 1996).

Appendix

SURVEY ITEMS

Racial Stereotypes
On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 means that it is a very poor description and 7 means that it is a very accurate description, how well do you think [. . .] describes most whites/most blacks?

1. lazy
2. prone to violence
3. prefer to live on welfare
4. hostile
5. dishonest

Racial Fairness (all items are reverse coded)

6. Do you feel that African-Americans in your community are treated less fairly than whites in dealing with the police, such as traffic incidents? (no = 1, yes = 2)
7. Now I'm going to read you several statements that some people make about problems with the justice system in their community. As I read each one, please rate how serious it is in your community on a 7-point scale, where 1 means it is not a problem and 7 means it is a serious problem.

   a. Courts that give harsher sentences to African-Americans than to whites.
   b. Police who stop and question blacks far more often than they stop whites.
   c. Police who care more about crimes against white people than crimes against minorities.

General Fairness

8. The justice system in this country treats people fairly and equally.
9. The courts in your area can usually be trusted to give everyone a fair trial.

Punitiveness

10. One good way to teach certain people right from wrong is to give them a good stiff punishment when they get out of line.
11. Parents need to stop using physical punishment as a way of getting their children to behave properly.

Fear of Crime

12. First, over the last five years or so, would you say that violent crime in our nation has increased, decreased, or stayed about the same?
13. Of all the problems facing the country today, such as education, taxes, and the environment, how would you rate the importance of the crime problem? Would you say it's the most important problem, no more important than other problems, or less important than other problems facing the nation today?

Equality

14. One of the big problems in this country is that we don't give everyone an equal chance. (reverse coded)
15. We shouldn't worry so much about how equal people are in this country.

Demographic Variables

Education: Respondents were assigned into the following categories based on their highest grade or level of education completed: (1) 8th grade or less; (2) 9–11th grade; (3) high school graduate/GED; (4) some college or post secondary school; (5) bachelor's degree; (6) some graduate studies; (7) master's degree; (8) doctoral degree.

South: A dummy variable coded 1 if respondents reside in one of the states of the former Confederacy, and 0 otherwise.

General Fairness, Punitiveness, and Equality: These items were measured using Likert scales ("strongly agree," "somewhat agree," "somewhat disagree," and "strongly disagree").

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