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# Racial attitudes and policy preferences

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**RACIAL ATTITUDES AND POLICY PREFERENCES**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Political Science

by

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyzes statistical models of the impact of racial attitudes on race-neutral policy preferences in the 2002 Louisiana population. Previous research has identified racial attitudes as a determinant of welfare spending preferences in the national white population. This paper uses ordered logit modeling to test for the impact of racial attitudes on welfare and public education spending preferences within a state population, with separate analyses for black and white respondents. Moreover, this analysis provides a parallel model for highway spending as a control for the theoretical race-coded nature of welfare and public education. The analysis demonstrates similar racialization of the ostensibly race-neutral policy areas for both black and white respondents. The findings show strong support for the theory that racial attitudes inform welfare spending preferences, and modest support that they influence education spending preferences. However, the analysis also shows that racial attitudes inform highway spending preferences. This counterintuitive finding casts doubt on the connections demonstrated by the models of other spending areas and suggests that the demonstrated statistical connection may be spurious.

## **Introduction**

This thesis explores the relationship between Louisiana citizens' social welfare spending preferences and their racial attitudes. Some evidence has been found at the national level that white citizens' welfare policy preferences are determined to some extent by their attitudes toward blacks (Gilens, 1999) -- in other words that welfare is a race-coded policy. Two untested implications of Gilens' theory are that 1) non-racialized policy areas should not demonstrate a relationship between racial attitudes and policy preferences, and 2) analysis of black citizens' racial attitudes and policy preferences should yield results different from those demonstrated by white citizens. This thesis tests both of these implications and extends the theory to explore whether public education is a race-coded policy area. Using a single dataset, I develop separate models for welfare, education and highway (the non-racialized control model) spending, estimating each for black and white respondents independently and together.

The term 'welfare' most commonly refers to means-tested anti-poverty programs like job preparedness, food stamps and direct cash assistance. Public education, while not means-tested, is also a social program designed to aid the poor; and it is through attitudes toward the poor that race enters the debate. So, education is likely to be influenced by racial attitudes. Throughout this report the term 'welfare' will refer specifically to means-tested anti-poverty programs. But, the phrase 'social welfare programs' will indicate reference to both anti-poverty and education programs.

Black citizens' preferences are overlooked in this research area practically because of insufficient sample sizes, and theoretically because the theory is grounded by the idea that welfare policies are seen as primarily benefiting black citizens, who are

considered undeserving by white citizens who oppose welfare spending.<sup>1</sup> However, to exclude analysis of black racial attitudes toward racialized policies is to presume that the contexts shaping white attitudes work differently on the black population. I contend that the theory should hold across races. If welfare (or education) is a pro-black policy then those who view blacks unfavorably, no matter their race, should oppose it. Further, if welfare (or education) is seen as serving those who behave contrary to the American values of hard work and self-sufficiency, then those who hold these values in high regard, no matter their race, should oppose it. Empirical testing is necessary to clearly examine how policy attitudes are determined in the population as a whole. If certain policy preferences are, indeed, informed by racial attitudes, then it may be argued that all races consider their racial attitudes when considering their preferences for those policies.

Particularly for Louisiana, any analysis of public opinion that excludes black respondents is incomplete. Louisiana's population was 33% black in 2002, with the percent black by parish ranging from 4% to 68%. Clearly, in some geographic contexts within the state blacks are in the majority. While in other states racial issues are not limited to the black/white dynamic, in Louisiana it is safe to say that the racial issues faced are primarily of a black/white nature.

This analysis also stands out because it examines this issue on a state, rather than federal, level. It is important to examine the relationship between racial attitudes and policy preferences on a statewide basis, because the policy-spending areas in question are funded to a great extent with state, not federal, dollars. Surveys written for nationally

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<sup>1</sup> Valentino, Hutchings and White (2002:78) performed similar research on racial priming and found identical results for their white-only and black and white samples. However, they did not have a large enough sample of blacks-only to test this group individually. They assert, however, that racial priming must work on both groups but to differing degrees.

representative samples inquire about the federal policy preferences of respondents. As spending in these areas varies significantly across states, it is particularly appropriate that this analysis be conducted on a state level inquiring about attitudes toward *state* spending. It is unlikely that respondents know the extent to which the welfare and education systems they witness are funded by federal vs. state expenditures. Certainly some citizens have federal spending preferences, but in the areas of welfare and education spending attitudes are likely informed by and about state-level expenditures regardless of the spending level mentioned in the survey question.

For Louisiana, in particular, education policy has been shaped by black/white tensions that still persist. Fifty Louisiana school districts have school desegregation cases still pending. In 23 out of 66<sup>2</sup> Louisiana school districts blacks make up the majority of public school students<sup>3</sup>. But, in all but five districts blacks make up a greater percentage of public school enrollments than parish-wide populations; in other words the public schools disproportionately serve black students. Overall, blacks are 33% of the Louisiana population and 48% of public school students. So, it is especially plausible to hypothesize that in Louisiana education funding may be a race-coded issue.

To examine a non-racialized policy area, this analysis also tests for a counterintuitive racial influence on transportation policy preferences. There is reason to suspect that the demonstrated relationship between racial attitudes and welfare preferences is spurious, and the covariation of each is caused by an unidentified

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<sup>2</sup> This analysis excludes analysis of Louisiana's 20 "special districts," which include charter schools, lab schools requiring tuition payment and schools for juvenile offenders and at-risk youth. In 2002, 5,219 (.7%) students were enrolled in the special districts. Black students made up 55% of the total enrollment in the special districts.

<sup>3</sup> Black students are from 5% to 93% of public school parish-level enrollment totals in Louisiana in 2002.

determinant (perhaps a finer measurement of ideology not captured by the traditional ideological continuum and party identification measures). Comparing the results of the welfare and education models to a seemingly non-racial highway model should settle this suspicion or raise serious questions about the validity of race-coded policy theory.

### **Data: 2002 Louisiana Survey**

This analysis applies Gilens' race-coded policy theory to the post-reform era of American welfare policy. Research on this topic primarily examines pre-reform attitudes toward welfare spending<sup>4</sup>. But, in 1996, with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, the federal government replaced its Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and enacted a set of reforms aimed at encouraging welfare clients to transition off of welfare to become productive members of the workforce. The message these reforms communicated to the American public was that welfare would no longer be the crutch that it was perceived to be. At the very least, the reforms raised awareness that the new emphasis of American welfare programs was on their necessarily temporary nature. Debate continues on the matter of whether the reforms were successful or whether they simply pushed welfare recipients into other publicly funded support programs (like Social Security disability insurance). However, the sweeping national reforms potentially reshaped Americans' preferences toward welfare policy. Welfare reform may have shifted Americans' perception that welfare is a mismanaged program for people with a lack of willingness to work rather than lack of ability to work. This analysis examines

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<sup>4</sup> Gilens uses data from the American National Election Study 1986, the General Social Survey 1990 and 1994, and the National Race and Politics Study 1991.



responses given to a survey conducted in June 2002, six years after the sweeping welfare policy reforms were signed into law in 1996.

An overview of the survey results show that support for welfare policy stands out among the policy areas addressed in the 2002 Louisiana Survey. The majority of respondents stated their support for increased spending in the areas of education (86%), health and hospitals (71%), roads and highways (70%) and the environment (54%). In contrast and similar to Gilens' findings for the American population as a whole, in Louisiana welfare stands out as a policy area that draws little support (18%) from Louisiana citizens (Garand, 2002: 1) – even in post-reform 2002.

## Literature Review

### The Changing Face of Racism

An overview of research on American racial attitudes and their linkage to policy preferences shows that there are two distinct generations of study (Sniderman, Piazza and Harvey, 1998: 18). The two are distinguished by the type of racism studied – traditional and *new*. Traditional racism is identified by respondents' willingness to overtly express derogatory evaluations of blacks in general. Traditional racism includes once common attitudes that blacks are less intelligent than whites, equal opportunity laws should not exist and that the two races should be segregated in their private and personal lives (Kinder and Sears, 1981). Some research has shown a marked decline in the prevalence of these attitudes (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo and Krysan, 1997). Survey research shows increasing support since the 1950s for the principal of racial equality (Sniderman, Piazza and Harvey, 1998:19).

However, the second generation of researchers (Kinder and Sears, 1981; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo and Krysan, 1997) qualify this superficial trend toward openness with the identification of a continued resistance against specific policies. Thus, the new racism is marked by support for racial equality in principal, but not in practice. Other attitudinal measures have indicated that prejudicial racial attitudes among whites toward blacks continue to exist regardless of the decline in traditional prejudicial attitudes. The *new* racism is more subtle, expressed through derogatory opinions about those believed to lack the American values of independence, individualism and hard work. Underlying the new racism is the idea that criticism of blacks was supplanted by a more tolerable criticism of lazy people lacking self-reliance, but quietly directed at the same minority

population (Kinder and Sears 1981; Sears, 1988; Sears, Van Laar, Carillo and Costerman, 1997).

Some research even shows that new racism has not only supplanted old views, but made the old views distasteful to the *new* racists. Valentino, Hutchings and White (2002:88) find that explicit racial appeals have less impact on candidate choice than more subtle or implicit appeals. This reduced influence of direct racism is likely due to the public's awareness of and distaste for racism that may still quietly underlie their political perspectives. That is, the public is sensitized to racial cues, which when overt are distasteful but when covert are effective at directing political choices.

### **Threat Hypothesis and Symbolic Racism**

Others have developed the threat hypothesis to explain new racism, or the gap between whites' willingness to accept racial equality in principal but not in practice. Giles and Evans (1986) develop what they call the power approach to examining group hostility. They study blacks and whites as groups competing for limited resources. In line with the objective context research, they find that the local concentration of blacks determines to a degree the extent to which whites support government policies that favor blacks. This effect is strongest for whites with strong group identity. Similarly, Taylor (1998, 2000) finds that higher concentrations of blacks in a community increase white prejudice and opposition to race-based policies. Specifically for Louisiana, research shows that in parishes where the concentration of blacks is higher there are more registered Republicans and more supporters of David Duke (an openly racist Louisiana politician) – both indications that racism is higher in those areas (Giles and Buckner, 1993; Giles and Hertz, 1994). In general, the threat hypothesis contends that white

voters' hostility toward blacks (and/or policies designed to help them) stems from tangible threats blacks represent to their safety, lifestyle and livelihood (Kinder and Sears, 1981: 415).

On the other hand, another prominent theory to explain the foundation of the new racism is *symbolic* racism. The symbolic racism hypothesis states that white opposition to policies designed to aid blacks is rooted in "deep-seated feeling of social morality and propriety and in early-learned racial fears and stereotypes," (Kinder and Sears, 1981: 416). Symbolic racism would inform policy preferences regardless of any actual or perceived threat that may exist. In attempting to disentangle the effects of symbolic racism and threat on policy preferences, Kinder and Sears (1981) test each independently and find that direct racial threats, measured as respondents' self-reported perception of (potential) loss of resources to blacks, have little influence on either voting behavior or policy preferences (see also Sears, Lau, Tyler and Allen, 1980; Sears, 1988). The political potency of symbolic racism that this research identifies informs much of the subsequent research on racial attitudes and policy preferences. Specifically for the explicitly racial policy area of affirmative action, Bobo (2000) finds that symbolic racism is a better predictor of attitudes than threat or other psychosocial characteristics.

### **Race-Coded Policies**

It is this new racism that serves as the basis for research on race-coded policies. Race-coded policies are those that are only implicitly racially targeted; thus, opposition to them is not obviously race-based. Welfare and crime policy are the primary areas studied as being race-coded. Gilens contends that welfare, crime, drug and immigration policies are inherently and covertly racial policies (1996:593). Peffley and Hurwitz (1998:58)

note that “hot-button” issues like crime and welfare rely on race to divide Americans along support and opposition lines, as do explicitly racial issues like school busing and affirmative action. Moreover, they find that even those resistant to expressing racial prejudice are susceptible to racial priming on these issues. That is, racial stereotypes linking policies to undesirable outcomes or social groups can affect the support levels of even non-prejudiced whites (Peffley and Hurwitz 1998: 93-4). Thus, race-coded policies have the potential to tap into latent and even purposefully suppressed racial stereotypes, fortifying their power to divide along a racially attitudinal dimension.

Racial priming is the term used by researchers to describe the process of accessing latent racial attitudes in order to sway policy preferences. The classic example of racial priming is the anti-Dukakis ad during the 1988 Bush v. Dukakis race for president. The ad used the image and story of William Horton, a black convict let out by Dukakis on furlough only to escape and commit rape and assault, to present Dukakis as soft on crime. At least a portion of the ad’s success in swaying public opinion of Dukakis’ stance on crime is credited to the fear of an escaped, violent black man that it stirred in viewers. “Abetted by news reports, amplified by Republican ads, assimilated through the cognitive quirks of audiences, William Horton came to incarnate liberalism’s failures and voters’ fears,” (Jamieson, 1992: 42). Thus, without framing the issue as a racial one, the Bush campaign was able to use racial stereotyping to sway support for their seemingly non-racial crime policy stance. (See also Mendelberg, 2001.)

While the use of the image of a black face to conjure racial prejudice seems an obvious way to implement racial priming, other research examines less obvious priming tactics. Valentino, Hutchings and White (2002:87) find that government spending and

taxation rhetoric is effective as a primer of racial attitudes to covertly influence candidate choice. Even in the absence of racial imagery, simply raising such issues has the power to prime racial attitudes. This evidence offers support that some non-racial policy areas are race coded.

Edsall and Edsall (1991) tracked the development of race-coded political language in the conservative revolution of 1980. As the American policy landscape transitioned from a broad civil rights battle to focusing on more narrow policy goals won by bussing and affirmative action, social and economic forces “undermined the capacity of ordinary citizens to tolerate modest sacrifices on behalf of the less well off,” (Edsall and Edsall, 1991:202). The GOP seized this opportunity to fuel a backlash against “special interests,” which was used as a coded term for minorities and the programs designed to aid them. Code words like ‘groups,’ ‘taxes,’ ‘big government,’ ‘quotas,’ ‘welfare,’ and ‘crime’ that pitted minorities against ‘ordinary citizens’ were common in the Republican rhetoric of the 1984 presidential election. Policies aimed at ‘fairness’ signaled those that tilted the playing field in favor of minorities (Edsall and Edsall, 1991: 213). It was out of this political environment that social welfare and crime policy were developed into race-coded policy areas.

Research shows that racial stereotypes play a powerful role in shaping whites’ political views of race-coded policies (Gilens, 1998; Hurwitz and Peffley, 1997). However, the influence of established stereotypes can be overcome (Peffley and Hurwitz, 1998: 91-4) at the individual level by the presentation of counter-stereotypical examples of racial minorities. This tactic might be useful in overcoming aggregate white opposition to such policies. They warn, however, that stereotype inhibition requires

sufficient numbers of contrary examples to overcome pervasive race-coded language and media effects. In essence, abundance is key.

Some research indicates that race-coded policies are more successful than racial policies, even if focused on the same issue. Bobo and Klugel (1993) find that explicitly racial policies like enterprise zones, education funds and opportunity enhancements for blacks receive less white support than similar race-neutral policies. Moreover, their findings show that white racial attitudes are a stronger determinant of opposition to explicitly racial policies than to income-targeted policies (1993:455-6). This supports the claim of other research that policies developed with a race-neutral focus, regardless of which races they inevitably aid, are more likely to garner support among white citizens (Wilson, 1991: 477-8; Skopcol, 1991: 432-3). However, Gilens (1998:173-4) argues that racial attitudes inform attitudes toward the poor, so even race-neutral policy support levels are suppressed to some extent by racial attitudes. The ‘hidden agenda,’ of race-neutral policies is not hidden very well. But, white support for race-neutral, race-coded anti-poverty policies is higher for specific policies that are viewed as helping to establish self-sufficiency. Housing assistance, Head Start and job training programs, in contrast to cash assistance programs, are seen as fitting this mold and are able to overcome resistance grounded in racial prejudice (Gilens, 1998: 196-7).

Gilens’ research on race-coded policies has focused on welfare policy, in particular. Gilens argues that non-black public opinion toward welfare policy is shaped by misinformed perceptions of blacks. As the theory goes, the media’s racialization (Gilens, 1999: 104-5) of poverty has shaped American public opinion toward welfare, even though welfare policy itself is technically race neutral. The centuries-old stereotype

that blacks are lazy is reinforced by media coverage of a “highly visible black urban underclass that has exerted an inordinate influence over popular images of blacks,” (Gilens, 1999:3). Considering biased media coverage as a chief component of the context in which respondents’ attitudes are formed, Gilens finds that non-black Americans who oppose welfare spending increases often have negative attitudes toward blacks, making welfare spending a race-coded policy area.

The results from a series of regression analyses of ANES data show that the belief that blacks lack commitment to a work ethic is the most powerful predictor of opposition to food stamp spending and negative attitudes toward welfare recipients (Gilens, 1999: 76)<sup>5</sup>. In a more comprehensive model of the determinants of opposition to welfare spending, Gilens finds that the most powerful predictors of opposition to increases in general welfare spending are the beliefs that blacks are lazy and that welfare recipients are undeserving (Gilens 1999: 92-3). These findings, Gilens argues, are evidence of the race-coded nature of welfare policy preferences.

Crime policy has also been examined as a race-coded issue, confirming the Gilens theory. Researchers have found that find that racial attitudes are a powerful determinant of willingness to adopt tougher crime policies (Peffley and Hurwitz, 1998; Kinder and Mendelberg, 1995:418-19; and Peffley, Hurwitz and Sniderman, 1997: 48-9). Franks and Garand (2002) tested Gilens’ theory on crime spending. Their results show some support for the theory that crime spending is a race-coded policy. Testing a model that includes variables to capture the objective racial and criminal context in which respondents live (threat hypothesis variables) as well as their subjective racial attitudes, they found some

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<sup>5</sup> Note that Gilens finds that the ANES feeling thermometer toward blacks is not a statistically significant predictor of welfare policy attitudes (Gilens, 1999: 76-7).



support that both the racial context and the racial affections of white respondents determined their levels of support for crime spending.

In sum, the scholarly writing on race-coded policies seems to agree that both welfare and crime qualify for this policy category. But, further exploration in additional policy areas is warranted to firmly establish race-coded policy theory. It may well turn out that there is some yet unmeasured aspect to policy preference development that causes racial attitudes and policy attitudes to vary in tandem, even when controlling for partisanship and pro-government attitudes. It may be that distaste for constraint of any kind leads to opposition toward policies designed to equalize racial equality (Schuman, Steeh and Bobo, 1985: 189). Rather than racial animosity or mere superficial support for the principal of racial equality, resistance to equalizing policies may be rooted in distaste for something unrelated to racial attitudes (Sniderman, Piazza and Harvey, 1998). Short of identifying that illusive missing control, this thesis includes a test of the relationship between highway spending and racial attitudes as a control.

### **Racial Attitudes and the Media's Influence**

As these theories suggest, the media plays a major role in disseminating racial stereotypes that influence race-coded policy preferences. Much of the research on the media's influence on racial attitudes has focused on the tendency of news media to present blacks as violent, which generates an increase in public support for crime spending and tougher sentencing (Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000; Campbell, 1995; Entman 1992; Hurwitz and Peffley 1997). Gilliam and Iyengar (2000: 560) find that local news programming tends to present minorities as violent, serving to substantiate negative attitudes about racial minorities. Entman (1992: 350-3) finds that, in contrast to coverage

of accused whites, blacks in crime stories are featured most often poorly dressed, physically held and without defensive sound bites. He also finds that black activists and politicians are presented as more demanding and self-interested than their white counterparts. So, even in the role of the authoritative source, blacks are presented as threatening and in violation of white values.

Campbell (1995:90) similarly criticizes local news' representation of minority authoritative figures. This interpretive analysis of local news coverage finds that the rare examples of minority reporters and anchorpersons serve to reinforce the view that assimilation is possible and has been achieved for the deserving few. Further, these assimilated minorities are the only ones worthy of authoritative positions in the news. Aside from those demonstrating white, middle-class ethics and values, the only other minorities presented in the news are those that fit the common stereotypes of athlete, entertainer and criminal (Campbell, 1995: 71-2).

These findings should be interpreted with caution, however, as they are based on analyses quite limited both geographically and temporally. Regardless of how widespread biased coverage is, biased news coverage has been found to have a measurable effect on political choices. Racial imagery in political ads has been shown to prime racial attitudes, increasing the extent to which candidate choices and impressions are dependent upon racial attitudes (Jamieson, 1992; Valentino, Hutchings and White, 2002:87; Mendelberg, 1997). Bolstering the argument, Valentino et al. (2002) find that racial priming works in both directions. They find that positive imagery of minorities suppresses the extent to which racial attitudes inform candidate preferences, and vice

versa. In either case, this research demonstrates the power media content has to exploit underlying racial attitudes and shape political outcomes.

Gilliam and Iyengar's (2000) work on the subject demonstrates an institutional tendency of local television news to highlight disproportionately black suspects in violent crime coverage, thus feeding viewers' perceptions of blacks as violent. Their experiments show that exposure to the 'crime script' significantly influences white attitudes about crime policy and racial stereotypes. Interestingly, they find that black viewers react to the crime script by lowering their support for tougher crime policies and their willingness to accept negative stereotypes of blacks, as if compensating for the impact such scripts have on white viewers (Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000: 570).

## Model and Data

This analysis will examine the effects of racial attitudes, political attitudes and a variety of social and economic context variables on support for spending in two public welfare policy areas (anti-poverty welfare and education) and the theoretically non-racialized policy area of highway spending. I will test for the effects of a variety of objective and subjective variables on the spending preferences of both black and white respondents separately and together.

To fully examine the variation in the explanatory strength of each variable for each of the racial subgroups, I estimate my models separately for white, black and all respondents.<sup>6</sup> If respondents' affect toward blacks is found to be a significant predictor of spending preferences, the models would tend to support Gilens' theory that anti-poverty policies are race-coded. To rule out a spurious cause for both variation in black affect and support for spending in these areas, I test a similar model for highway spending preferences. There is no theoretical reason to believe that highway spending preferences are race-coded, so a test for an impact of black affect on these preferences would be a useful tool to inform the question of whether anti-poverty policies are race-coded or some other explanation is necessary.

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<sup>6</sup> My original proposition was to include three interaction variables in each of the nine models to capture the effects of the interactions between respondents' feelings toward blacks and the objective conditions in which they live (i.e., amount of news exposure, size of local black population and size of local black population served by welfare/education spending). However, due to small sample sizes resulting from missing data, I had to eliminate the interaction terms from the models. When included, none was significant and each added independently or in combination with others substantially changed the results of other independent variables. The resulting changes were likely methodological artifacts rather than substantive findings. In future research, however, more complete models would include these interactions in tests of larger samples of the population.

### **Dependent Variable: Spending Preferences**

The dependent variable in each of these models describes respondents' attitudes toward a particular spending area. Respondents are asked a set of questions about their spending preferences for a variety of policy areas including anti-poverty programs, education and highways. The education question wording is as follows: "Do you think that spending on education in Louisiana should be increased, decreased, or kept the same?" The welfare question wording is as follows: "Do you think that spending on welfare should be increased, decreased, or kept the same?" Though the anti-poverty question fails to mention Louisiana specifically, the prefatory paragraph to this section of survey questions reminds respondents that the questions are inquiring about spending in the state of Louisiana. The transportation question wording is as follows: "Do you think that spending on highways should be increased, decreased, or kept the same?" Following these questions for each spending area another question was asked, where appropriate, to capture the strength of respondents' answers. The repeated qualifying question was, "Is that increased/decreased a lot or a little?"

The dependent variable is a measure that captures the strength of respondents' views on spending in each of the areas. The measure is based on a five-point ordinal scale ranging from -2 to 2, with -2 indicating that spending should be decreased a lot, zero indicating a desire for spending stasis, and 2 indicating that spending should be increased a lot.

### **Primary Independent Variable: Black Feeling Thermometer (Black Affect)**

Black Affect is the primary independent variable in this study. Respondents are asked to rate their feelings toward a variety of subgroups of the population including

members of environmental groups, political ideologies and parties, and racial and ethnic groups. The black feeling thermometer score is self-reported on scale from 0 to 100 with zero indicating very negative feelings toward blacks and 100 indicating very positive feelings.

The feeling thermometer scores are the only measures of respondents' racial attitudes on the 2002 Louisiana Survey. Unfortunately, this single measure is not enough to test for the independent effects of traditional versus new racial attitudes on respondents' policy preferences. The thermometer score offers only a summary measure of respondents' racial attitudes, but as a self-reported summary score it captures both obvious and subtle racial attitudes. Some analysis has shown that the feeling thermometer scores over time have demonstrated a stability in white racial views that other more specific measures failed to capture (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo and Krysan, 1997:187).

If respondents' support for spending on social welfare is race-coded as Gilens contends, the coefficient for the black feeling thermometer measures should be positive and significant. In other words, as feelings grow in the positive direction support for spending should increase and vice versa.

While it may seem counterintuitive, there is variation in Black Affect among black respondents. The mean for blacks on this measure is 78.96 with values spanning the full range from 1 to 100. For white respondents, the mean is 67.32, also with values spanning the full range of responses. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the frequency distribution of responses on the black feeling thermometer question for blacks and whites.

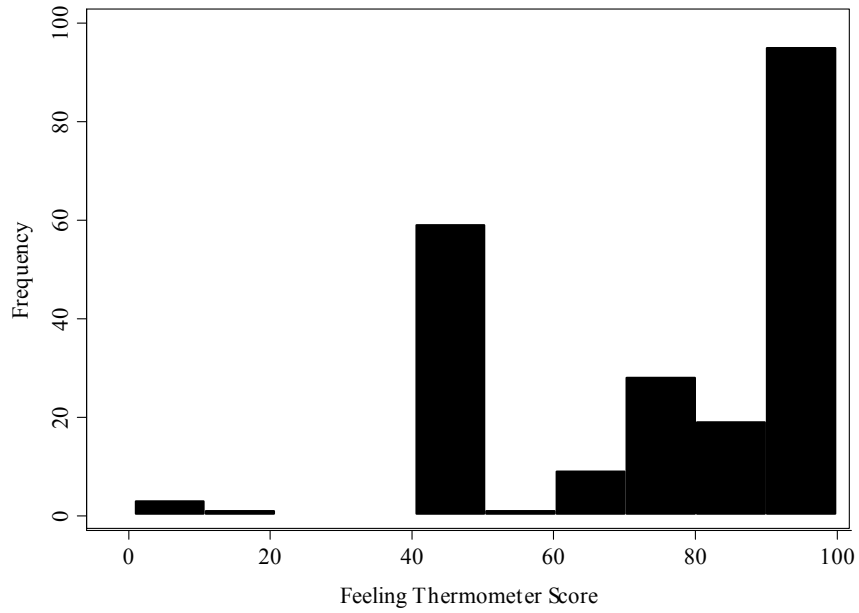


Figure 1. Black Affect Frequencies for Black Respondents

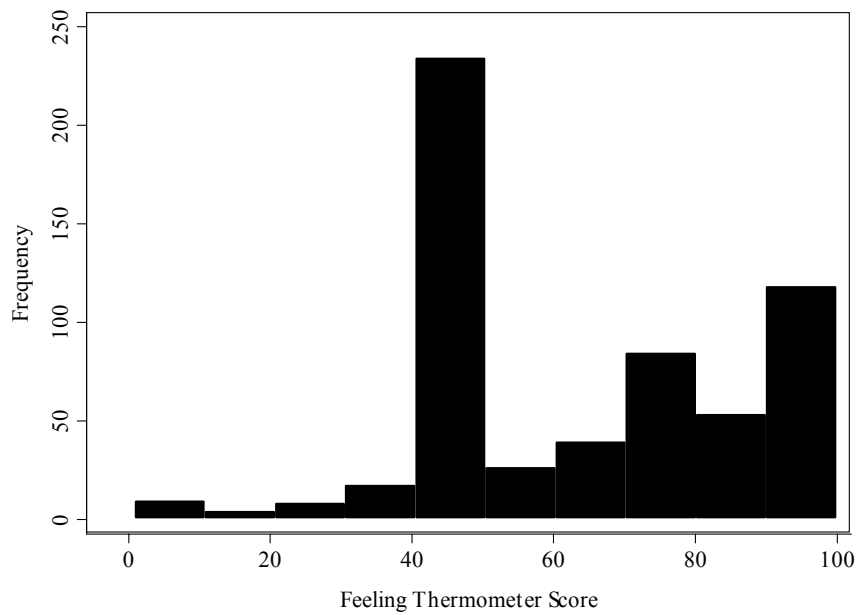


Figure 2. Black Affect Frequencies for White Respondents

## Contextual Variables

### Black Population by Parish

Much of state politics is a product of the level of racial/ethnic diversity in the state. The racial/ethnic context within which policies are formed are as much or more important than the values or ideas of the political players (Hero and Tolbert 1996: 854). This theory can be extended to sub-state levels, such as the parish in Louisiana. This report will examine the impact of parish-level racial diversity as a determinant of policy attitudes.

According to the threat hypothesis, white respondents living in parishes with a higher percentage of black citizens are more likely to oppose social welfare spending increases because minority groups present at least the threat of being a drain on resources available to others. The coefficient for the relationship between Black Population and support for spending in the social welfare models with white respondents should be negative. In the non-racialized highway model, there should be no relationship demonstrated. According to an implication of the Gilens theory, the data for black respondents should show that support for welfare spending is unrelated to the black population size.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The feeling thermometer score alone captures the respondent's purely subjective evaluation of the black population, but does not account for the objective conditions within which that respondent lives. A more fully specified model would examine the extent to which the socio-economic context in which respondents live affects the degree to which their feelings toward blacks affect their policy preferences. Interaction terms would be included to capture these various effects. The terms would be created by multiplying black affect with each of the context variables: black population, black poverty rate, black welfare/public school enrollment rate and overall poverty rate. In parishes where the percentage black/impooverished is higher, negative feelings toward blacks should depress support for education and welfare spending to a greater extent. In parishes with a less visible/impooverished minority, feelings toward blacks should demonstrate less of an influence on social welfare policy preferences.



### Black Welfare Recipients by Parish/Black Public School Enrollments by Parish

Similarly, the parish-level percentages of service recipients who are black are important contextual variables to include. Black Welfare Recipiency Rate captures the extent to which welfare is objectively a black social program, and Black Enrollment captures the extent to which public education is a black social program. The welfare data are collected from the Louisiana Department of Social Services welfare statistics reports, which provide a breakdown of welfare recipients according to parish and race/ethnicity. The education data are collected from the Louisiana Department of Education student data reports.<sup>8</sup>

In parishes where the welfare rolls/public schools have higher percentages of black recipients/students, I would expect welfare to be viewed as a black issue; and thus for spending support among whites to decline as black welfare/enrollment increases. Again here, the implication of Gilens' theory that black respondents will react differently than whites, the more each of these policy areas can objectively be regarded as benefiting blacks the more support black respondents should demonstrate.

### Black Poverty Rate

Parish-level black poverty rates are included to examine the extent to which the overall objective economic context in which respondents live affects their policy preferences. Black poverty rates are calculated using 2000 Census data regarding the poverty status of black residents in 1999. This is the most recent year for which these data are available; and, although the year under study is 2002, it is unlikely that the poverty conditions for blacks changed significantly between 1999 and 2002. The black

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<sup>8</sup> There are 66 school districts in Louisiana. Statewide, there is a near even split in black and white enrollments with 48% black and 49% white.

poverty rate for each parish describes the percentage of the total black population that lived in households reporting incomes below the poverty thresholds for their household makeup (i.e., number of adults and children).<sup>9</sup> The black poverty rates in Louisiana range from 25% to 61% of the total black population for each parish.

The black and white models should yield different results for this variable. Black respondents living in parishes where the black poverty rate is higher are expected to show more support for social welfare spending increases than those living in areas where blacks are better off financially, all else being equal. The white model should demonstrate the opposite, according to the threat hypothesis. A poorer black population presents a greater drain on available resources, so should exert a negative influence on social welfare policy support levels for white respondents.

### **Media Effects**

Including in this model a measure of media exposure is an important test of Gilens' contention that biased media coverage is responsible for creating the link between negative racial stereotypes and attitudes toward welfare policy. The Louisiana Survey asked respondents the following questions about their media usage: 1.) "In the past 24 hours, did you watch the national news on TV?" 2.) "In the past 24 hours, did you read a daily newspaper?" 3.) "In the past 24 hours, did you watch the local TV news shows in the late afternoon or early evening?" The answers to each are coded 1 for yes and 0 for

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<sup>9</sup> Pre-tax family income excluding non-cash benefits is used to determine whether a family lies below their annual poverty threshold. Every year the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issues 48 poverty thresholds adjusted for inflation that are calculated based on the number of cohabitating adults and children. The official poverty thresholds for 1999 ranged from \$8,501 for a family of one adult to \$32,208 for a family of 9 or more with 8 or more children. Needs-based anti-poverty programs generally establish criteria for participation at some percentage above the annual poverty threshold. So, the number of residents in an area eligible for programs would often lie above the number of residents below the poverty threshold. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003)

no. By summing each respondent's answers to these questions, media usage can be described along a scale from 0 to 3, with 0 meaning that the respondent had no news exposure, 3 indicating exposure to all three types of news.

I hypothesize the coefficient for the direct effect of news exposure on spending preferences will be negative. Admittedly, this variable means little without a corresponding content analysis to quantify the extent to which coverage is biased against blacks presenting them in an unfavorable light and as disproportionately representative of the 'undeserving' poor. However, if one takes for granted the media's anti-black bias as demonstrated in other studies, increased exposure to the news should depress support for welfare spending.<sup>10</sup>

### **Individual Socio-Economic Characteristics**

Other personal characteristics certainly influence respondents' policy preferences, regardless of their race, racial feelings or the racial context of the communities in which they live. If one views welfare spending as representative of government spending in general, one must consider the influence of individual characteristics generally thought of as pushing spending preferences toward a more conservative perspective. Age is coded 18 to 100 with 100 representing all respondents over the age of 100. Welfare spending attitudes are expected to become more negative as age increases.

Gender is coded on a dichotomous scale with zero for men and 1 for women.

Research on the gender gap in politics has shown that women generally have more liberal

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<sup>10</sup> Along those lines, exposure to *biased* media, which clearly draws the connection between minorities and welfare programs, should also intensify the extent to which feelings toward blacks affect welfare policy preferences. A more fully specified model would include an interaction variable (black affect \* media exposure) to test for this. I would expect this interaction to show that respondents' who pay more attention to the news allow their feelings toward blacks to influence their policy preferences to a greater degree than those who pay no attention to the news. Again, however, the small sample sizes available for this study preclude inclusion of this interaction term.

social welfare views than men, so the coefficient for this variable is expected to be positive. Race is also coded on a dichotomous scale with zero for non-blacks and 1 for blacks. This control is only used in the models that include respondents of all races.

The education level of respondents is measured on a scale from 1 to 7 with the categories representing the following levels of completed schooling: 1.) Less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade; 2.) 9<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup> grade; 3.) High school diploma; 4.) Some college or vocational school; 5.) A 4-year college degree; 6.) Some graduate work 7.) Advanced degree (M.A., M.S., J.D., Ph.D., M.D., etc.). Increased education is expected to result in decreased support for welfare spending.

Similarly, family income is expected to have a mitigating effect on support for welfare spending. Wealthier citizens are expected to display more opposition to increased funding for social welfare programs. Family income is coded on a scale from 1 to 8, with 1 representing family income of under \$10,000 and 8 representing family income of over \$70,000.

Those who are married and/or own their own homes are also expected to show less support for welfare spending increases. Home ownership is a dichotomous variable coded 1 for those who own their homes and 0 for others. Homeowners are expected generally to value self-sufficiency, thus de-value welfare expenditures. Further, they are also more likely to be mindful of their tax expenses, thus more likely to oppose welfare for reasons of self-interest.

#### **Children Attend Public Schools/ Ever Received Welfare Benefits/ Miles Driven**

Respondents who use the programs in question are expected to show greater support for spending in those program areas. This should hold for both the black and

white models. The survey asks respondents whether they have ever received welfare benefits, whether their children currently attend public schools and how many miles a week they drive. For comparison's sake it is unfortunate that the questions inquire about different temporal conditions (education and transportation, present; welfare, past and present), but these questions nevertheless suit the purpose of identifying a possible allegiance to the programs.

### **Individual Attitudes**

#### Quality of Education/ Anti-poverty Programs/ Roads and Highways

Respondents, regardless of their race, who perceive that the program in question is currently operating at less-than-satisfactory levels are also expected to show support for greater spending, all else being equal. The survey asks respondents to grade “public schools in Louisiana,” “welfare and anti-poverty programs” and “roads and highways” in terms of their contributions to the quality of life in Louisiana. The grades are coded on a scale from 0 to 4 with 0 being an F-grade and 4 being an A-grade. The coefficients for these variables in their respective models are expected to be negative, indicating that higher grades accompany decreased support for spending increases.

#### Party Identification and Ideological Identification

Conservatives and Republicans alike are expected to oppose increased spending in these policy areas. Accordingly, liberals and Democrats are expected to favor spending increases. Separate variables for Party ID and ideology have been coded to capture these effects. Party ID is coded on a scale from 0 to 6 with strong Democrats at the low end and strong Republicans at the high end. Similarly, ideology is coded on a 7-point scale with strong liberals at the low end and strong conservatives at the high end.

These measures are expected to have negative coefficients, with higher values (Republican, conservative) corresponding to opposition to social welfare spending. Again, this should hold for both the black and white models.

### Pro-Government Attitudes

Respondents' general beliefs regarding appropriate levels of government intervention are expected to be important determinants of attitudes toward government spending. Greater general support for government should correspond to greater support for the individual program areas in question.

The results of a factor analysis of three survey questions was used to create a single variable, pro-government, to describe respondents' attitudes toward government in general. The three combined items are each coded on a dichotomous scale with 1 representing less support for government intervention and 2 representing more support. The items are: 1.) One, the less government, the better; or two there are more things that government should be doing. 2.) One, the free market can handle today's complex economic problems without government being involved; or, two, we need a strong government to handle these problems<sup>11</sup>. 3.) One, the main reason government has become bigger over the years is because it has gotten involved in things that people should do for themselves; or two, government has become bigger because the problems we face have become bigger.

### Political Trust

A similar factor analysis was conducted on survey questions designed to capture the extent to which respondents trust state government in Louisiana. Political trust has

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<sup>11</sup> For the purpose of this analysis, the order and coding of possible responses on this question were reversed from the way they were actually asked.

been found to be an important determinant of policy attitudes (Hetherington and Globetti, 2002). The extent to which a respondent trusts government should inform the extent to which a respondent will support program expansion or spending increases. The questions included in this measure of political trust are: 1.) Do you think that people in state government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it? 2.) How many people do you think running state government are crooked – quite a few, not very many, or hardly any? 3.) How much of the time do you think you can trust state government to do what is right --- just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

The answers to each of these questions are coded on a scale from 1 to 4, with the higher numbers indicating more trust in government and its officials. I expect the single political trust variable to be positively related to support for welfare spending.

## **Methods and Procedures**

The method used to analyze these models is ordered logit analysis, which is appropriate for dependent variables coded on an ordinal scale. The results presented for the various models show coefficients that describe change in the log-odds ratio of the dependent variable for a 1-unit change in the independent variable. Calculations can be made to convert the log-odds ratios to probabilities of moving from each point on the ordinal scale to the next point on the ordinal scale. But, for the purposes of this analysis, I will focus on the direction and significance of each coefficient, rather than the probabilities of each type of corresponding change.

### **Non-Contextual Gilens-Type Models**

Tables 1 through 4 present the results of non-contextual models of respondent spending preferences. Gilens did not include contextual variables in his analysis; so, as a preliminary test of his theory for the 2002 Louisiana population, these non-contextual models approximate as closely as possible the Gilens model. The major difference between these models and the Gilens model (besides the additional spending areas of education and highways) is the use of the measure of Black Affect. However, even with this more simplified measure of racial attitudes, these models seem to confirm Gilens findings with regard to welfare spending attitudes. In Table 1 the coefficient for Black Affect in the White Respondents model is positive and significant, indicating that respondents' welfare spending preferences are, indeed, linked to their feelings toward blacks.

This table also offers an interesting analysis of one of the implications of Gilens' theory, namely that Black Affect works differently on spending preferences in the black



and white populations. Notice that the Black Affect coefficient is positive and significant for all three of the models presented in this table. While Black Affect seems to function similarly in each population group, other variables seem to act differently across groups. For example, notice that political trust, party ID, ideology and past receipt of welfare benefits are determinants of white (not black) welfare spending attitudes; but, age and education are determinants of black (not white) welfare spending attitudes.

Table 2 offers some evidence that education funding is a race-coded issue in Louisiana, but not for whites as one might expect. Being that public school enrollments in Louisiana are disproportionately black, I expected that the white respondents would show consideration of their black affect in determining their spending preferences. However, the coefficient for Black Affect in the model of white respondents is insignificant. In contrast, it is significant and positive in the model of black respondents, indicating that blacks' feelings toward blacks correspond to their education spending preferences. The results also indicate that black respondents' spending preferences correspond to their political trust, family income and whether their children are in enrolled in public schools. For blacks, age and education also seem to matter here: older and more educated black respondents prefer spending decreases in education. Whites' education levels also determine their educational spending preferences, but in the opposite direction. Increased education levels in white respondents correspond to preferences for spending increases. And, as expected, conservative ideologies and anti-government sentiments in whites correspond to preferences for spending decreases.

The non-contextual highways model presented in Table 3 offers another way to test an implication of Gilens' theory, namely that non-racialized spending areas should

**Table 1. Racial Comparison of Non-Contextual Ordered-Logit Model Results - Welfare**

	All Races		Black Respondents		White Respondents	
	B	Z	B	Z	B	Z
Black Affect	0.0149	3.51 ***	0.0254	2.84 ***	0.0167	3.10 ***
News Exposure	0.0506	0.50	-0.1060	-0.53	0.1544	1.22
Subjective Welfare Grade	0.1032	1.04	-0.1347	-0.64	0.0879	0.70
Political Trust	0.2859	3.05 ***	0.0286	0.13	0.3016	2.64 ***
Anti-government	-0.1193	-1.20	0.3180	1.26	-0.0792	-0.68
Party ID	-0.1143	-2.44 ***	-0.0472	-0.38	-0.1423	-2.56 ***
Ideology	-0.0926	-1.76 **	-0.0893	-0.83	-0.1458	-2.15 **
Age	0.0140	2.12 **	0.0234	1.58 *	0.0102	1.27
Gender	-0.1852	-0.98	0.3845	0.82	-0.2837	-1.25
Education	-0.0967	-1.36 *	-0.2574	-1.56 *	-0.0292	-0.34
Family Income	-0.0612	-1.24	-0.2735	-2.23 **	-0.0476	-0.80
Home Ownership	-0.0520	-0.21	0.0335	0.07	0.1580	0.49
Past Receipt of Welfare Benefits	0.7123	2.71 ***	0.3646	0.82	1.1712	3.26 ***
Black	0.2882	1.15	-	-	-	-
N	450		108		307	
Chi-square	83.19		26.63		61.37	
Chi-square Probability Value	0.0000		0.0140		0.0000	
Pseudo R-square	0.0681		0.0911		0.0747	

1-tailed Significance

\*\*\* = .01

\*\* = .05

\* = .10

Note that intercept and cut points are excluded for the sake of brevity.

**Table 2. Racial Comparison of Non-Contextual Ordered-Logit Model Results - Education**

	All Races		Black Respondents		White Respondents	
	B	Z	B	Z	B	Z
Black Affect	0.0075	1.45 *	0.0260	2.09 **	0.0027	0.44
News Exposure	0.1152	0.89	0.2109	0.62	-0.0157	-0.10
Subjective Schools Grade	-0.1976	-1.66 **	-0.3523	-1.05	-0.1668	-1.22
Political Trust	-0.0298	-0.25	0.8207	1.63 *	0.0180	0.13
Anti-government	-0.2859	-2.28 **	-0.2222	-0.58	-0.3264	-2.28 **
Party ID	-0.0984	-1.64 *	-0.1217	-0.58	-0.0838	-1.24
Ideology	-0.1666	-2.28 **	0.0380	0.19	-0.1982	-2.23 **
Age	-0.0141	-1.67 **	-0.0410	-1.61 *	-0.0051	-0.53
Gender	0.0055	0.02	-0.9498	-0.90	0.0231	0.08
Education	0.1635	1.78 **	-0.4077	-1.52 *	0.2592	2.42 ***
Family Income	-0.0413	-0.64	0.3202	1.38 *	-0.0592	-0.81
Home Ownership	0.1373	0.42	-0.2901	-0.33	0.2076	0.52
Children in Public Schools	0.1677	0.64	1.0543	1.48 *	0.1771	0.56
Black	0.1645	0.45	-	-	-	-
N	467		114		319	
Chi-square	47.68		18.19		30.96	
Chi-square Probability Value	0.0000		0.1504		0.0034	
Pseudo R-square	0.0676		0.1686		0.0583	

1-tailed Significance

\*\*\* = .01

\*\* = .05

\* = .10

Note that intercept and cut points are excluded for the sake of brevity.

not demonstrate correspondence between spending preferences and racial feelings. However, these results seem to indicate that black and white respondents, when analyzed independently, do racialize their highway spending preferences – but in opposite directions. For blacks, the more they like blacks the *more* they support highway spending increases. For whites, the more they like blacks the *less* they support highway spending increases. There is no case to be made that highway spending is a race-coded issue area, much less that blacks and whites would incorporate their racial views differently into their spending preferences in this area, yet a Gilens-type models demonstrates racialization of this spending area. These findings suggest cause for concern about the validity of this theory, but analysis of the more fully-specified models is still warranted before any conclusions can be drawn.

While the racial sub-groups demonstrate racialization of highway spending preferences, when all races are tested in a single model highway spending preferences do not seem to be racialized. Table 4 shows a side-by-side comparison of the non-contextual all-races results for each spending area. Welfare and education spending are racialized and highway spending is not. Though, it should be noted that black affect is only significant at the relaxed .10 level of statistical significance in the education model. Thus, this analysis offers support for the Gilens implication that non-racialized policy areas will not statistically demonstrate racialization. However, Gilens' theory pertained to whites only, yet these results include both black and white respondents. So, these results cast doubt on the other Gilens implication that blacks and whites incorporate their racial views differently into their spending preferences.

**Table 3. Racial Comparison of Non-Contextual Ordered-Logit Model Results - Highways**

	All Races		Black Respondents		White Respondents	
	B	Z	B	Z	B	Z
Black Affect	-0.0041	-1.00	0.0183	2.22 **	-0.0094	-1.80 **
News Exposure	0.1929	1.87 **	0.1133	0.53	0.2403	1.88 **
Subjective Highways Grade	-0.7033	-6.59 ***	-0.6887	-3.25 ***	-0.6150	-4.42 ***
Political Trust	-0.0346	-0.36	-0.0279	-0.12	-0.1272	-1.11
Anti-government	-0.0219	-0.22	0.4133	1.57 *	-0.1045	-0.88
Party ID	0.0118	0.24	0.1004	0.77	-0.0194	-0.34
Ideology	0.0715	1.34 *	0.0719	0.65	0.0839	1.25
Age	0.0062	0.91	-0.0164	-1.04	0.0112	1.36 *
Gender	0.0336	0.17	0.3601	0.67	-0.1087	-0.46
Education	-0.0263	-0.37	-0.1338	-0.83	-0.0017	-0.02
Family Income	-0.0328	-0.64	0.0665	0.53	-0.0944	-1.53 *
Home Ownership	-0.0725	-0.29	0.3276	0.65	-0.2187	-0.64
Miles Driven Weekly	0.0873	0.97	-0.0926	-0.47	0.0773	0.68
Black	0.0741	0.29	-	-	-	-
N	469		112		323	
Chi-square	67.60		23.95		49.99	
Chi-square Probability Value	0.0000		0.0316		0.0000	
Pseudo R-square	0.0621		0.0870		0.0694	

1-tailed Significance

\*\*\* = .01

\*\* = .05

\* = .10

Note that intercept and cut points are excluded for the sake of brevity.

**Table 4. Non-Contextual Ordered-Logit Model Results by Spending Area - All Races**

	Welfare			Education			Highways	
	B	Z		B	Z		B	Z
Black Affect	0.0149	3.51 ***		0.0075	1.45 *		-0.0041	-1.00
News Exposure	0.0506	0.50		0.1152	0.89		0.1929	1.87 **
Subjective Grade	0.1032	1.04		-0.1976	-1.66 **		-0.7033	-6.59 ***
Political Trust	0.2859	3.05 ***		-0.0298	-0.25		-0.0346	-0.36
Anti-government	-0.1193	-1.20		-0.2859	-2.28 **		-0.0219	-0.22
Party ID	-0.1143	-2.44 ***		-0.0984	-1.64 *		0.0118	0.24
Ideology	-0.0926	-1.76 **		-0.1666	-2.28 **		0.0715	1.34 *
Age	0.0140	2.12 **		-0.0141	-1.67 **		0.0062	0.91
Gender	-0.1852	-0.98		0.0055	0.02		0.0336	0.17
Education	-0.0967	-1.36 *		0.1635	1.78 **		-0.0263	-0.37
Family Income	-0.0612	-1.24		-0.0413	-0.64		-0.0328	-0.64
Home Ownership	-0.0520	-0.21		0.1373	0.42		-0.0725	-0.29
Use of Program	0.7123	2.71 ***		0.1677	0.64		0.0873	0.97
Black	0.2882	1.15		0.1645	0.45		0.0741	0.29
N	450			467			469	
Chi-square	83.19			47.68			67.60	
Chi-square Probability Value	0.0000			0.0000			0.0000	
Pseudo R-square	0.0681			0.0676			0.0621	

1-tailed Significance

\*\*\* = .01

\*\* = .05

\* = .10

Note that intercept and cut points are excluded for the sake of brevity.

## Contextual Models

Tables 5 through 9 display the results of the models that include parish-level contextual data as competing explanations for spending preferences. The Gilens model for welfare spending did not include any objective contextual data to describe the community in which respondents live. But, these contextual variables are important to consider when building this theory, because they help to disentangle any objective reasons respondents may have for racializing their race-neutral policy preferences.

The White Respondents model results in Table 5 show basically the Gilens model with context controls for Overall Poverty Rate, Black Poverty Rate, Black Welfare Reciprocity Rate and Black Population Rate. Even controlling for objective community context, the coefficient for the primary independent variable, Black Affect, is significant and in the expected positive direction, confirming the race-coded nature of welfare spending. Moreover, none of the coefficients for the context variables is significant, casting doubt on any claims that the black affect-spending preference relationship is spurious.

The Black Respondents and All Races models also show that Black Affect is a significant determinant of welfare spending preferences. Once again, it seems that black and white respondents similarly racialize this policy area, but that each racial group has its own set of other determinants of their spending preferences. Black Affect and Age are both determinants of preferences for both racial subgroups. Older people and those who like blacks more prefer increases in welfare spending. On the other hand, the Black Respondents model shows that education level and family income are also determinants of this sub-group's spending preferences. Those with higher education and income levels

prefer welfare spending decreases. For whites, those who are more ideologically conservative and/or republican prefer spending decreases. Additionally, Political Trust and Past Reciprocity of Welfare Benefits are both positive and significant determinants of welfare spending preferences for whites.

Similar to the non-contextual model, the contextual education model presented in Table 6 shows that education is more of a racialized issue for black respondents than for white respondents. The primary independent variable, Black Affect, shows here that when all races are combined and for black respondents only it is a positive and significant (though at the more relaxed .10 level in the all-races model) determinant of spending preferences. However, for whites the coefficient is insignificant. It seems that for white respondents the variables for anti-government sentiments, party identification, ideology and education level determine education spending preferences. For black respondents, the determinants are their subjective assessment of public school performance, age and whether their children attend public schools.

The context variables performed a bit differently in the education model compared to the welfare model. Context turned out not to be a determinant of spending preferences for the racial sub-groups, but two context variables are significant in the All Races education model. In opposing directions and at relaxed levels of significance, Black School Enrollment Rate and Black Population are determinants of spending preferences. It seems that, in the aggregate, in communities where there is a higher percentage of blacks in the overall population respondents may be more likely to prefer increases in education spending. But, where public school enrollments have a higher percentage of black students, respondents may prefer decreases in spending on education.



So, citizens are more resistant to spending increases in education if they live in areas where schools can objectively be viewed as primarily serving the black population. This finding seems to support the idea that education is a race coded policy area, especially since the addition of significant context variables did not render the Black Affect variable insignificant.

The contextual highway spending model (Table 7) produced some odd results. In the aggregate, the results show that, indeed, highway spending is not a racialized policy area. This would bolster the Gilens model of identifying racialization of preferences in race-neutral policy areas. However, both the racial sub-group models produced significant coefficients for Black Affect, leading to the counterintuitive conclusion that highway spending is race coded. Though, the effect for black respondents is positive and for white respondents negative. These results tell the story that blacks who like blacks prefer more spending on highways and whites who like blacks prefer less spending on highways. These results are basically meaningless because they are not based in any theory that highway spending is a race-coded policy area. But, they do raise questions about the validity of identifying policy racialization in this way. There may, indeed, be some other explanation for the covariation of Black Affect and spending preferences.

That doubt aside, a comparison of the All Races model results (Table 8) for each spending area shows that in the aggregate Louisiana citizens racialize welfare and education spending, but not highway spending. This finding fits well with the Gilens welfare spending theory and offers an extension of the theory into education spending. However, these findings cast doubt upon Gilens' contention that media exposure

**Table 5. Racial Comparison of Contextual Ordered-Logit Model Results - Welfare**

	All Races			Black Respondents			White Respondents		
	B	Z		B	Z		B	Z	
Black Affect	0.0180	4.03	***	0.0258	2.75	***	0.0212	3.75	***
News Exposure	0.0429	0.40		-0.1696	-0.81		0.1429	1.06	
Subjective Welfare Grade	0.0576	0.56		-0.1519	-0.70		0.0516	0.39	
Political Trust	0.3014	3.11	***	0.0175	0.08		0.3277	2.76	***
Anti-government	-0.1053	-1.01		0.2453	0.89		-0.0493	-0.40	
Party ID	-0.1103	-2.28	**	-0.0768	-0.58		-0.1288	-2.23	**
Ideology	-0.0867	-1.59	*	-0.0888	-0.80		-0.1390	-1.96	**
Age	0.0176	2.54	***	0.0216	1.34	*	0.0126	1.47	*
Gender	-0.1312	-0.66		0.4394	0.92		-0.1530	-0.64	
Education	-0.0908	-1.24		-0.2927	-1.61	*	-0.0383	-0.43	
Family Income	-0.0645	-1.26		-0.2818	-2.18	**	-0.0500	-0.82	
Home Ownership	-0.0688	-0.27		0.1299	0.26		0.1282	0.38	
Past Receipt of Welfare Benefits	0.7392	2.74	***	0.3816	0.82		1.1990	3.24	***
Overall Poverty Rate	3.0887	0.50		-1.5152	-0.09		-1.9002	-0.26	
Black Poverty Rate	-2.9062	-1.13		1.7702	0.23		-1.1503	-0.38	
Black Welfare Reciprocity Rate	0.5299	0.47		-3.0543	-0.77		1.1908	0.90	
Black Population	-0.6613	-0.39		3.2465	0.61		-0.3171	-0.16	
Black	0.2504	0.94		-	-		-	-	
N	424			103			289		
Chi-square	84.27			27.04			61.91		
Chi-square Probability Value	0.0000			0.0574			0.0000		
Pseudo R-square	0.0728			0.0955			0.0801		

1-tailed Significance

\*\*\* = .01

\*\* = .05

\* = .10

Note that intercept and cut points are excluded for the sake of brevity.

**Table 6. Racial Comparison of Contextual Ordered-Logit Model Results - Education**

	All Races		Black Respondents		White Respondents	
	B	Z	B	Z	B	Z
Black Affect	0.0090	1.62 *	0.0324	2.23 **	0.0043	0.66
News Exposure	0.1325	0.96	0.3851	0.98	-0.0065	-0.04
Subjective Schools Grade	-0.2722	-2.10 **	-0.5977	-1.63 *	-0.1546	-1.05
Political Trust	0.0136	0.11	0.4869	0.92	0.0361	0.26
Anti-government	-0.3285	-2.45 ***	-0.2060	-0.44	-0.3412	-2.25 **
Party ID	-0.1026	-1.61 *	-0.1174	-0.43	-0.0974	-1.37 *
Ideology	-0.2009	-2.54 ***	0.1012	0.44	-0.2308	-2.44 ***
Age	-0.0104	-1.15	-0.0428	-1.32 *	-0.0028	-0.28
Gender	0.1337	0.52	-0.3705	-0.35	0.0617	0.21
Education	0.2243	2.31 **	-0.2477	-0.72	0.2953	2.67 ***
Family Income	-0.0410	-0.60	0.1999	0.73	-0.0410	-0.54
Home Ownership	0.2187	0.63	-0.1392	-0.15	0.2357	0.57
Children in Public Schools	0.2007	0.72	1.1542	1.40 *	0.1494	0.46
Overall Poverty Rate	-2.7228	-0.36	8.8330	0.36	-6.9865	-0.83
Black Poverty Rate	-0.7250	-0.22	4.0532	0.30	0.0599	0.02
Black Public School Enrollment Rate	-2.2860	-1.42 *	-3.9188	-0.59	-1.3127	-0.73
Black Population	3.5605	1.37 *	3.6345	0.35	3.1200	1.08
Black	0.3805	0.92	-	-	-	-
N	442		109		301	
Chi-square	57.85		17.53		35.70	
Chi-square Probability Value	0.0000		0.4191		0.0050	
Pseudo R-square	0.0876		0.1968		0.0708	

1-tailed Significance

\*\*\* = .01

\*\* = .05

\* = .10

Note that intercept and cut points are excluded for the sake of brevity.

**Table 7. Racial Comparison of Contextual Ordered-Logit Model Results - Highways**

	All Races		Black Respondents			White Respondents		
	B	Z	B	Z		B	Z	
Black Affect	-0.0021	-0.49	0.0213	2.40	***	-0.0077	-1.41	*
News Exposure	0.2091	1.94	0.0862	0.39		0.2349	1.75	**
Subjective Highways Grade	-0.6796	-6.22	-0.6130	-2.73	***	-0.5535	-3.89	***
Political Trust	-0.0850	-0.86	-0.1009	-0.42		-0.1948	-1.65	**
Anti-government	-0.0454	-0.43	0.2454	0.88		-0.1314	-1.05	
Party ID	-0.0119	-0.24	0.0962	0.68		-0.0368	-0.62	
Ideology	0.0950	1.70	0.0680	0.59		0.1064	1.51	*
Age	0.0078	1.09	-0.0255	-1.45	*	0.0142	1.61	*
Gender	-0.0161	-0.08	0.4529	0.80		-0.1761	-0.72	
Education	-0.0055	-0.07	-0.1138	-0.65		0.0111	0.12	
Family Income	-0.0287	-0.54	-0.0004	0.00		-0.0819	-1.28	*
Home Ownership	0.0285	0.11	0.8652	1.55	*	-0.1149	-0.32	
Miles Driven Weekly	0.0575	0.60	-0.1220	-0.57		0.0655	0.54	
Overall Poverty Rate	3.3217	0.56	34.5585	2.18	**	-0.9975	-0.14	
Black Poverty Rate	2.3908	0.94	-12.1000	-1.64	*	4.7538	1.58	**
Black Welfare Reciprocity Rate	-	-	-	-		-	-	
Black Population	0.0936	0.07	-6.5016	-1.81	**	1.5768	1.04	
Black	-0.1112	-0.40	-	-		-	-	
N	443		107			305		
Chi-square	71.68		29.13			55.46		
Chi-square Probability Value	0.0000		0.0231			0.0000		
Pseudo R-square	0.0696		0.1111			0.0811		

\*\*\* = .01

\*\* = .05

\* = .10

Note that intercept and cut points are excluded for the sake of brevity.

contributes to the identified racialization. The News Exposure variable is only significant for the highways model.

Regarding the Gilens implication that blacks and whites racialize welfare spending differently, Table 9 offers the results of a test of whether the Black Affect determinant works differently for blacks and whites. By including an interaction term (Black Affect \* Black) in the All Races contextual model for each spending area, I test whether Black Affect is different for blacks and whites. The insignificant interaction term for the welfare model shows that the effect is the same for both groups, which makes sense considering that Black Affect was highly significant and in the same direction for the black and white sub-groups of the contextual welfare model. However, the interaction term for the education model is significant and positive, indicating that the difference between Black Affect for whites and Black Affect for blacks in the contextual education model is significant. A review of Table 6 shows that Black Affect was positive and significant for blacks, but insignificant (yet still positive) for whites. This significant interaction confirms that difference. More interesting, though, is the significance of the interaction term in the highways model. Remember that the black and white Black Affect coefficients were in opposite directions in the highways model. This interaction terms confirms that black and white respondents “racialize” highway spending in opposite directions. This is odd considering that there should be no evidence of racialization at all. Again, on this point alone this analysis leads to questions about the Gilens theory. Why would highway spending be racialized? Or, is anything really racialized? Is there an as yet unidentified explanation for the covariation of feelings toward blacks and spending preferences?

**Table 8. Contextual Ordered-Logit Model Results by Spending Area - All Races**

	Welfare			Education			Highways	
	B	Z		B	Z		B	Z
Black Affect	0.0180	4.03 ***		0.0090	1.62 *		-0.0021	-0.49
News Exposure	0.0429	0.40		0.1325	0.96		0.2091	1.94 **
Subjective Grade	0.0576	0.56		-0.2722	-2.10 **		-0.6796	-6.22 ***
Political Trust	0.3014	3.11 ***		0.0136	0.11		-0.0850	-0.86
Anti-government	-0.1053	-1.01		-0.3285	-2.45 ***		-0.0454	-0.43
Party ID	-0.1103	-2.28 **		-0.1026	-1.61 *		-0.0119	-0.24
Ideology	-0.0867	-1.59 *		-0.2009	-2.54 ***		0.0950	1.70 **
Age	0.0176	2.54 ***		-0.0104	-1.15		0.0078	1.09
Gender	-0.1312	-0.66		0.1337	0.52		-0.0161	-0.08
Education	-0.0908	-1.24		0.2243	2.31 **		-0.0055	-0.07
Family Income	-0.0645	-1.26		-0.0410	-0.60		-0.0287	-0.54
Home Ownership	-0.0688	-0.27		0.2187	0.63		0.0285	0.11
Use of Program	0.7392	2.74 ***		0.2007	0.72		0.0575	0.60
Overall Poverty Rate	3.0887	0.50		-2.7228	-0.36		3.3217	0.56
Black Poverty Rate	-2.9062	-1.13		-0.7250	-0.22		2.3908	0.94
Black Welfare Reciprocity/School Enrollment Rate	0.5299	0.47		-2.2860	-1.42 *		-	-
Black Population	-0.6613	-0.39		3.5605	1.37 *		0.0936	0.07
Black	0.2504	0.94		0.3805	0.92		-0.1112	-0.40
N	424			442			443	
Chi-square	84.27			57.85			71.68	
Chi-square Probability Value	0.0000			0.0000			0.0000	
Pseudo R-square	0.0728			0.0876			0.0696	

1-tailed Significance

\*\*\* = .01

\*\* = .05

\* = .10

Note that intercept and cut points are excluded for the sake of brevity.

**Table 9. Contextual Ordered-Logit Model Results by Spending Area - All Races, Including (Black Affect\*Black) Interaction**

	Welfare			Education			Highways		
	B	Z		B	Z		B	Z	
Black Affect	0.0190	3.67 ***		0.0040	0.66		-0.0090	-1.78 **	
News Exposure	0.0446	0.42		0.1372	0.99		0.2076	1.92 **	
Subjective Grade	0.0540	0.52		-0.2612	-2.01 **		-0.6858	-6.26 ***	
Political Trust	0.3040	3.13 ***		0.0114	0.09		-0.0948	-0.96	
Anti-government	-0.1076	-1.03		-0.3163	-2.36 ***		-0.0354	-0.34	
Party ID	-0.1103	-2.28 **		-0.1064	-1.66 **		-0.0124	-0.24	
Ideology	-0.0846	-1.55 *		-0.2139	-2.67 ***		0.0842	1.50 *	
Age	0.0177	2.55 ***		-0.0103	-1.13		0.0074	1.02	
Gender	-0.1333	-0.67		0.1466	0.57		-0.0232	-0.11	
Education	-0.0898	-1.22		0.2308	2.36 ***		-0.0107	-0.14	
Family Income	-0.0646	-1.26		-0.0420	-0.61		-0.0314	-0.59	
Home Ownership	-0.0704	-0.27		0.2123	0.61		0.0550	0.21	
Use of Program	0.7431	2.75 ***		0.2252	0.81		0.0394	0.41	
Overall Poverty Rate	3.1101	0.50		-2.0270	-0.27		3.8638	0.64	
Black Poverty Rate	-2.8792	-1.12		-1.2420	-0.38		2.1931	0.86	
Black Welfare Reciprocity/School Enrollment Rate	0.5455	0.48		-2.4192	-1.49 *		-	-	
Black Population	-0.6801	-0.40		3.7085	1.41 *		0.0871	0.07	
Black	0.5288	0.69		-1.3968	-1.37 *		-2.0146	-2.63 ***	
Black Affect * Black	-0.0037	-0.39		0.0253	1.82 **		0.0250	2.65 ***	
N	424			442			443		
Chi-square	84.42			61.25			78.72		
Chi-square Probability Value	0.0000			0.0000			0.0000		
Pseudo R-square	0.0729			0.0928			0.0764		

1-tailed Significance

\*\*\* = .01

\*\* = .05

\* = .10

Note that intercept and cut points are excluded for the sake of brevity.

## Conclusion

This analysis answers some questions raised by Gilens' research on welfare as a race-coded policy area. One implication of Gilens' theory is that non-racialized policy areas should not demonstrate a relationship between racial attitudes and policy preferences. This research offers evidence to the contrary. The non-contextual, Gilens-type models presented here show that black and white respondents, when analyzed independently, do show covariation of their feelings toward blacks and their highway spending preferences. When analyzed together, however, the significance of the covariance drops out. The same is pattern is demonstrated in more fully specified models with contextual variables included. Moreover, it seems that blacks and whites racialize highway spending in different directions with blacks who favor blacks wanting spending increases and whites who favor blacks wanting spending decreases.

This difference of effect for black and white respondents points to the next untested Gilens implication – that analysis of black citizens' racial attitudes and policy preferences should yield results different from those demonstrated by white citizens. This analysis shows that blacks and whites similarly racialize both welfare and highway spending, but not education spending. The results presented here show that, when black and white racial sub-groups are tested independently, only blacks demonstrate racialization of their education spending preferences. But, in both contextual and non-contextual models that include all races, there is evidence that education is a race-coded policy area. So, while in some policy areas black and white racialization behaves differently in terms of its existence or direction, it cannot be taken for granted that black



citizens' spending preferences are formed independently of their racial views of even their own racial group.

In total, the race-coded nature of ostensibly race-neutral policies may be more widespread than the Gilens theory suggests. Racialization may extend to other social welfare policy areas like public education, but also to policy areas completely unrelated to social welfare like highways. Additionally, there is now evidence to suspect that blacks use their views toward blacks in similar ways to whites when adopting public policy preferences. If, as the theory goes, modern negative feelings toward blacks are fueled not only by negative stereotypes but also by the values of individualism and personal responsibility, then it is reasonable to expect that all racial groups would racialize policies to some extent.

The fact that this report offers evidence of the racialization of highway spending casts doubt on the validity these statistical models. There may exist some unidentified reason, other than race coding, for the covariation of feelings toward blacks and policy-area spending preferences. My best untested guess would be that the same people who will with certainty answer a fairly vague and general government spending question are the ones who are most willing to anonymously place their racial stereotypes on a scale from 1 to 100. This would lead to findings of racialization due to the plain fact that statistical analysis precludes the inclusion of cases where respondents refused to answer questions that to them seem unanswerable. The fact that we can only analyze populations of people willing to offer subjective generalizations of racial groups plagues this research area. In contrast to the simplistic approach of the Louisiana Survey, the surveys Gilens used asked more specific questions about racial stereotypes and combined them with

questions about broader values to pinpoint racial affect. However, even the more nuanced questions ask respondents to say aloud their racial biases, requiring them not only to admit these taboos to themselves but also to a stranger on the phone. Moreover, the spending and policy support questions are equally vague, likely leading those who know more about the subject matter to refuse to answer. Survey research has no choice but to proceed in spite of these limitations, but it is important to remember that we are failing to analyze that portion of the population whose intellect refuses the simplification of perspective that surveys require.

On the other hand, survey research proves time and again its capacity to capture the aggregate public perspective, even if portions of the population are excluded by default. For this reason, it is important to pursue further this line of research into the links between the aggregate public's racial views and their race-neutral policy preferences. The models presented in this analysis can be improved in several ways. Primarily, they should be tested on larger sample sizes to allow for the full set of interaction variables to be included. The interaction variables capture an important component of policy racialization -- that is, the varying impact of racial affect in different settings of objective context. Beyond larger sample sizes and better model specification, this research should be conducted on a state by state basis, because welfare policy is set primarily at the state level, and it makes little sense to sum the welfare preferences of citizens in the nation as a whole.

On a final note and from a broader policy-making perspective, I contend that research into the racialization of race-neutral policy is valid and important. If social welfare policy is inextricably linked to racial stereotypes, then the race-neutral nature of

the policy area should be reevaluated. Serious questions are raised when a program that is viewed by the mass public as primarily serving a particular racial group is billed by elites as being race neutral. Why are elites continuing to bill the program as race neutral in spite of widespread beliefs to the contrary? Why is the public so convinced of underlying race pandering? Should social welfare programs be race targeted and more directly and explicitly paternalistic? Should there be explicitly labeled sub-sets of social welfare programs for sub-sets of the population in need? Why is there still racially disproportionate reliance on certain public programs? It seems that the public has a sense of something or reflects a phenomenon that elites are refusing to acknowledge.

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## **Vita**

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