Class along the Color Line: Racial Politics, Local Geography, and White Preferences in Modern America

Nina Yancy

University College

Department of Politics and International Relations
University of Oxford

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Politics

January 2018

98,938 words

Abstract

This thesis traces the contours of the Black-White color line in modern America by illuminating how Whites' racialized political behavior varies across local geographic contexts.

In a critical reinterpretation of the racial threat hypothesis, I argue that local geography conditions the relationship between Whites' racial orientations and their preferences on policies related to race—but not because Whites are passively threatened in proximity to a Black population. Rather, Whites are active, subjective perceivers of their surroundings who have an interest in maintaining their racial privilege. This conceptual shift not only challenges the assumed neutrality of Whites' vision; it also enables me to identify the range of contextual indicators that Whites might construe as threatening, and the range of White attitudes that are activated as a result.

My empirical evidence comes from three case studies. The first two use geocoded survey data to analyze White opinion on welfare spending in 2000, and on affirmative action between 2006 and 2010. The third study draws on in-depth interviews conducted in 2016, exploring an issue related to school desegregation in Louisiana. Each study affirms the core findings of the thesis: Whites' policy preferences are polarized according to racial orientations in settings where race is salient; and a shared White perspective is evident even across polarized attitudes.

My findings offer hope, showing that a sign of threat to some Whites may activate racially tolerant behavior in others; as well as reason to restrain our optimism, challenging the assumption that affluent Blacks, unlike the "undeserving" Black poor, will not be perceived as threatening by Whites. Ultimately, only by recognizing the color line's *responsiveness* to local geography—and its *resilience* even as White attitudes liberalize and Black class positions improve—can we understand the line's persistence or the possibility of one day dismantling it.

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List of Abbreviations

ACS . . . . . American Community Survey

AFDC . . . . . Aid for Families with Dependent Children

ANES . . . . . American National Election Study

BRAC . . . . . Baton Rouge Area Chamber

BRAF . . . . . Baton Rouge Area Foundation

EEOC . . . . . Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

FHA . . . . . Federal Housing Administration

GSS . . . . . General Social Survey

HBCU . . . . . Historically Black Colleges and Universities

I-10/I-110 . . . . Interstate 10/Interstate 110

LSU . . . . . Louisiana State University

MAUP . . . . . Modifiable Areal Unit Problem

MD . . . . . Metropolitan Division

MSA . . . . . Metropolitan Statistical Area

NBR . . . . . North Baton Rouge

OCOSD . . . . . One Community, One School District

BRS . . . . . Blacks' relative (economic) status, specifically as perceived by Whites

PBS . . . . . Public Broadcasting Service

PRWORA . . . . Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act

TANF . . . . . Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

TBR . . . . . Together Baton Rouge

"White" is a metaphor for power.

- James Baldwin (1979 [2016])
I Am Not Your Negro

1

How the Color Line Bends

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The heat was oppressive, even under the shade of one of the towering oak trees that cover the grounds of Louisiana State University. A blanket of humidity weighed down the campus, as did a tense silence. Baton Rouge was two weeks into a bloody summer.

The vigil I was attending was being held to commemorate two tragic events that took place in July of 2016. The first was the death of Alton Sterling, a 37-year-old Black[1] man who was

1. Throughout this thesis, I capitalize Black and White unless quoting an author who chooses not to capitalize. There is a long debate behind the capitalization of race terms: W.E.B. Du Bois, who was pivotal in making the capitalization of "Negro" standard in the late 1920s, famously called "the use of a small letter for the name of twelve million Americans and two hundred million human beings a personal insult." (Cited in Lori L. Tharps, "The Case for Black With a Capital B," *The New York Times*, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/19/opinion/the-case-for-black-with-a-capital-b.html.) Although I do not directly engage in the politics of how the races are referenced in writing, I am sympathetic to Du Bois and capitalize Black and White in order to recognize them as proper nouns.

killed at point-blank range by a Baton Rouge police officer on July 5th.[2] The second event was the killing of three local law enforcement officers—Montrell Jackson, Matthew Gerald, and Brad Garafola—who were shot by a sniper from Kansas City, MO in a shocking act of vengeance for Sterling's death, only a week and a half later.

The theme of the vigil was clear: it called for "unity" and "healing" after a painful couple of weeks for Baton Rouge. What was unclear, however, was how much Sterling was meant to be included in the service. The White student body representative who spoke explicitly framed his remarks as a tribute to the "ultimate sacrifice of the officers" and a condemnation of "the plague of violence that has found its way into our community;" he mentioned Sterling's death only as an event that tested the community's "bonds of friendship."

The Black student representative who spoke next appeared uneasy. "Just to reiterate," he said, "we are here to recognize all the lives. You may feel he (*referencing the previous speaker*) didn't say certain names, but we're here to vigilize [*sic*] all the lives."[3] Most of the other speakers, however, followed what we had been told were the "ground rules" for the event: that "no side would be taken." As a result, much was said about the importance of loving one another and condemning hate and violence—but Sterling, and the realities of life in the poor, Black community where he had lived, were all but invisible.

I looked around at the other vigil attendees, all of us crowded into the shade and nursing the lemonade the organizers had passed out to try to fight the heat. Did anyone else think it was strange that Sterling was almost entirely unmentioned? Or that an event held at one of the most racially tense moments in Baton Rouge's recent history almost entirely avoided any mention of race?

2. Officers Blane Salamoni and Howie Lake II, both White, had been called to the scene after receiving a 911 call about a man believed to have a gun outside the Triple-S Food Mart on North Foster Drive. Sterling, who was well known in the North Baton Rouge community for playing music and selling CDs outside the Triple-S, put his hands on the hood of the police car as instructed when the officers arrived. But when Sterling later removed his hands, Lake used his taser on Sterling, and Salamoni put his gun to Sterling's head and threatened to kill him. Both officers tackled him to the ground; Salamoni announced that Sterling was going for a gun and then fired several shots into Sterling's chest. When Sterling started struggling to get up, Salamoni fired three more shots into Sterling's back. In June 2017, the Department of Justice announced that no federal charges would be brought against the officers, who had been on paid leave since the shooting.

3. I should not imply that there was a simple divide between Blacks wanting to recognize Sterling and Whites wanting to recognize the officers. Many Whites condemned Sterling's death, or at least recognized that the officers had acted with unwarranted force; and Blacks thoroughly recognized the tragedy of the officers' deaths. Moreover, one of the fallen officers was Black (Jackson), as is a considerable share of the Baton Rouge Police Department. The extent to which Blacks felt torn between tragedies in the wake of the officer shootings was further complicated by the fact that the sniper who killed the officers in Baton Rouge (like the sniper who executed a similarly reprehensible event in Dallas a week prior) was a Black man. A number of Blacks I encountered reported their fear that this would be the case as soon as they heard the news, knowing that a Black shooter would fuel the arguments of Whites who were unsympathetic to claims of racialized policing.

On second thought, I myself was hardly surprised. The Black-White divide in Baton Rouge—and the United States more generally—had been both painfully obvious and easily ignored by Whites long before July 2016. Making sure that "no side was taken" was undoubtedly an attempt to keep the vigil calm and orderly at a time when the racial divide was harder to ignore than usual.

At the end of the service, I said a few hellos before seeking shelter in the air-conditioning of my car. I had hardly expected to be in Baton Rouge during a time when Whites' attentiveness to the racial order was so acutely sharpened. I reflected on the artificial silence around race at the vigil—the palpable implication that the divide that needed to be "healed" was a racial one. I reflected, too, on the constructed invisibility of the part of town where Sterling lived and died—a severely segregated enclave in the north of Baton Rouge, a world away from the leafy university campus I had just left.

I thought of the writer who famously captured the kind of invisibility I encountered that day. As Ralph Ellison writes: "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me."[4]

To refuse to see implies that something is in fact seen, but rendered invisible. In contrast to Sterling, some Blacks were seen and then remained visible at the vigil, most notably Montrell Jackson, one of the fallen officers. The matter of how decisions are made about Blacks' visibility—and who makes these decisions—prompts consideration of the question Toni Morrison posed in response to Ellison: "Invisible to whom?" she asked. "Not to me."[5]

•

In this thesis, I show how White Americans behave when and where they are likely to see Blacks—particularly, when Whites are likely to perceive Blacks as a threat to Whites' racial group interests. I empirically demonstrate that the local salience of either race itself, or economic characteristics of the racial order, explains the relationship between what Whites think about Blacks and the political preferences Whites express in metropolitan areas across the United States. In the process, I challenge the neutrality that is typically assigned to the White perspective in racial politics scholarship, instead exposing the subjectivity of when Whites see or do not see

4. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), 3.

5. Hilton Als, "Ghosts in the House: How Toni Morrison Fostered a Generation of Black Writers," *The New Yorker*, October 2003, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/10/27/ghosts-in-the-house.

Blacks—both of which can serve to forward White interests.[6] This all amounts to a map of sorts: a guide to tracing the contours of the color line in the 21st century.

Why is such a map needed? It has been well over a century since Frederick Douglass first used the term "color line" in writing in 1881,[7] and since W.E.B. Du Bois popularized it in 1903.[8] Both authors used the term polemically, in reference to the glaring racial divide that persisted beyond the abolition of slavery. Their reference to Blacks' inferior political, economic, and social position as evidence of a dividing "line" between the races is likely intuitive to many. But, to use the color line as an analytic concept, it is important both to define it in explicit terms, and to emphasize that it is as material as it is metaphorical. Mary Pattillo captures this duality in her definition: "The color-line is a metaphor for the *mechanisms and practices* that maintain racial inequality as well as a more literal description of the many *places and systems* in which blacks are on one side and whites are on another side of a visible or invisible line."[9]

There is no shortage of research illuminating the dynamics of the color line as either metaphorical or material. In both of these regards, we see a dizzying amount of complexity in contemporary America. When it comes to White orientations toward Blacks, racial animus today may present itself as old-fashioned prejudice, subtle resentment clothed in egalitarian rhetoric, or the even subtler valorization of Whiteness by racially tolerant Whites—though we cannot ignore that allyship and anti-racism have grown.[10] This exists against a material backdrop that is equally

6. Below, I discuss how the racial threat hypothesis assumes the neutrality of Whites' perspective by uncritically equating a proximate Black population with a threat. But the assumption that Whites' vision is neutral—that what Whites see is the objective truth, or is the only thing that matters—is evident throughout racial politics scholarship. Consider, for example, the common failure to specify when *White* Americans are being studied, rather than Americans in general. Melissa Harris-Lacewell makes this critique of Martin Gilens's classic *Why Americans Hate Welfare* (along with her broader critique of the failure of much scholarship on White racial attitudes to engage with the existence of Blacks at all; see Melissa V. Harris-Lacewell, "The Heart of the Politics of Race: Centering Black People in the Study of White Racial Attitudes," *Journal of Black Studies* 34, no. 2 (2003): 222–249). More broadly, the historical popularity of the "race relations" approach to studying race in America—which prioritizes interracial harmony even if Blacks remain subjugated—implies that, because racial harmony would be good for Whites, it is an absolute good. See Hanes Walton Jr., Cheryl M. Miller, and Joseph P. McCormick II, "Race and Political Science: The Dual Traditions of Race Relations Politics and African-American Politics," *Political Science in History: Research Programs and Political Traditions*, 1995, 145–174. A final example comes from scholarship that critically interrogates but nonetheless defers to Whiteness as a neutral or passive position. I make this critique of Ruth Frankenberg's classic *White Women, Race Matters* in Chapter 6 Section 6.2.

7. Frederick Douglass, "The Color Line," *The North American Review* 132, no. 295 (1881): 567–577.

8. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996).

9. Emphasis added. Mary Pattillo, "Foreword," in *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, ed. St Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 912.

10. On the valorization of Whiteness, see, for example, Pattillo on the "conundrum of integration politics," which stigmatizes Black spaces and thus undercuts its own goal of encouraging Whites to live alongside Blacks. Mary Pattillo, "The Problem of Integration," *NYU Furman Center Blog*, 2014, http://furmancenter.org/research/iri/essay/the-problem-of-integration.

varied: deep disparity persists between Blacks and Whites, but a Black middle class that has grown, slowly and against the odds, should challenge the underlying assumption in too many debates that all Blacks are poor. Moreover, when we talk about "White Americans," we are referring to a group spread out across a vast and diverse nation, whose experiences of race and inequality vary greatly depending on the part of the country in which they live.

I am far from the first to highlight this complexity.[11] Rarely, however, do debates about the persistence of the color line recognize this complexity in *both* attitudinal and material terms, or the propensity for the two manifestations of the line to be mutually reinforcing. As such, existing research tells us little about how the racial and economic demographics that Whites see in their local geographies shape White opinion on matters of race.

My answer to this question reveals how the metaphorical color line responds to the material one. Accordingly, I use the term "color line" primarily in reference to the line's metaphorical manifestation—specifically in Whites' racialized political behavior—as it bends across place. I show the color line's *responsiveness* to different geographies of racial and socioeconomic diversity; and its *resilience* even as Blacks' class positions rise and as Whites' prejudices soften. We too often discuss whether Whites are "racist" rather than appreciating the variety of attitudes Whites hold toward Blacks, the variety of class positions that Blacks occupy, or the variety of situations in which racial evaluations are brought to bear on political behavior. This not only simplifies White opinion, Blacks' life experiences, and America's geographic diversity. It also means that existing literature posits racism as an individual-level "psychological flaw" that America is still struggling to correct—or perhaps as a group-level phenomenon produced by Whites' privileged

11. This point is obvious in relation to the study of White racial attitudes, which dates back almost 80 years and continues to evolve. A wealth of scholarship has also explored the relevance of local geography to politics, considering how both political outcomes and attitudes are related to place. Less often recognized in studies of White racial attitudes, however, is research into economic and political diversity within Black communities, particularly conducted by Black scholars. Well before William Julius Wilson's seminal work on the different experiences of the Black poor and non-poor, foundational analyses were offered by the likes of Du Bois, St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, and Franklin Frazier. Mary Pattillo has examined how middle class Blacks negotiate their racial and class identities in the present day, for example in Mary Pattillo, *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). As for the diversity of opinion and ideology among Blacks, valuable insight comes from works including Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) and Dara Z. Strolovitch, *Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Yet another stream of work explores the mixed economic progress and precariousness of the Black middle class. Middle- and upper-income Blacks still live in poorer neighborhoods than their White equivalents and are more likely to fall out of the middle class from one generation to the next. On these points, see Patrick Sharkey, "Spatial Segmentation and the Black Middle Class," *American Journal of Sociology* 119, no. 4 (2014): 903–954 and Bhashkar Mazumder, "Black–White Differences in Intergenerational Economic Mobility in the United States," *Economic Perspectives* 38, no. 1 (2014).

epistemic, economic, and political position—but in either case, able to be understood in isolation from the material conditions of the racial order in Whites' local geographies.[12] My analysis instead synthesizes these individual- and group-level approaches, and also puts them in context. I build on the premise that dominant groups are committed to maintaining their privilege, while further highlighting individual group members' capacity to be flexible in supporting that commitment against the backdrop of a complex racial and economic landscape.

This thesis therefore documents the color line's ability to bend but remain intact, evidenced by Whites' flexible commitment to maintaining their privileged position in local geographies across the United States. I make this claim over the course of three case studies that examine White opinion on three seminal issues in racial politics scholarship: (1) welfare spending, which I investigate using geocoded survey data from 2000; (2) affirmative action, investigated using a geocoded panel dataset spanning from 2006 to 2010; and (3) school desegregation, investigated through qualitative interviews conducted in Baton Rouge in 2016, discussing a specific issue related to the local control of schools. By analyzing how Whites' policy preferences are contextualized by local geography in each of these case studies, I have two aims.

The first aim is to offer a novel application of the racial threat hypothesis, which in its classic formulation holds that Whites in proximity to a large Black population will respond with heightened prejudicial attitudes or actions.[13] I synthesize the insights of Herbert Blumer (and others who analyze racism in structural terms) with the logic of racial threat in order to conceptualize prejudice as a sense of group position that is activated by local geographic context.[14] This conceptualization then underpins my empirical documentation of the flexibility of the color line across geographic contexts. Through my analysis of geocoded national survey data, I show that *policy preferences are polarized according to Whites' racial orientations* in settings where race is likely to be salient. Such polarization reveals the situational activation of Whites' orientations toward Blacks, whether positive or negative views, or normative or descriptive ones. This application of the threat hypothesis shows that the color line can bend in a number of ways, demonstrating a need to think more expansively about what a "threat" response looks like. On the one hand, I find reason for

12. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove, 1967), 77.

13. V. O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1949); Hubert M. Blalock, *Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations* (New York; London: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1967).

14. Herbert Blumer, "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position," *The Pacific Sociological Review* 1, no. 1 (1958): 3–7.

hope, showing that a proximate Black population may indicate threat to some Whites (exacerbating opposition to welfare spending) but activate racially tolerant attitudes in others (instead amplifying support for welfare). On the other hand, I find reason to restrain our optimism, offering new insight into Whites' likelihood of perceiving a "status threat" from the Black middle class (and becoming more opposed to affirmative action as a result). In pursuing this first aim, I reveal the responsiveness of the color line to different geographies of race and class.

My second aim is to critique the racial threat hypothesis even as I employ and expand upon it: it fails to theorize Whites as agents who perceive threats and otherwise interpret their surroundings, instead positing them as the passive victims of a threat or passive participants in racial politics more generally. This critique highlights a larger epistemological bias in scholarship on Whites' orientations toward Blacks (or Whites' "racial attitudes"), which typically assigns neutrality to the White perspective despite studying White racism as a social scientific problem.[15] I challenge this bias by sharing in the commitment of critical race theorists and feminist standpoint theorists to analyze Whites' view of racial politics as only one of many perspectives, and further, one conditioned by Whites' privileged position.[16] I offer empirical evidence that Whites' perspective is subjective—reflecting Whites' own feelings and concerns as much as the external world—by demonstrating that racial and income segregation affect the visibility of demographics Whites are likely to construe as threatening in my quantitative studies. I further show that this subjectivity is associated with Whites' racial group identity by offering evidence of *a shared White perspective even across polarized attitudes*. I demonstrate that the threat posed by the Black middle class is likely to be perceived across the spectrum of racial attitudes. I also identify consistencies in the viewpoints of Whites on opposite sides of a fight over public schooling in Baton Rouge, drawing on the 48 qualitative interviews I conducted with White and Black Americans. By pursuing this second aim, I reveal the resilience of the color line even as White attitudes might liberalize and as Blacks' economic position might improve.

My two aims together support a thesis that critically reinterprets the racial threat hypothesis. I show that the situational activation of Whites' racialized preferences across geographic contexts is a key explanatory factor behind the persistence of the color line. To call political preferences

15. See note 6 above.

16. For an overview of standpoint theory, see Sandra G. Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies* (Psychology Press, 2004). The central tenets of standpoint theory are summarized later in this chapter, and discussed in detail in Part III.

"racialized" is not simply to say that they are influenced by racial animus. Racialization more expansively refers to the "extension of racial meaning" to something not inherently associated with race—explaining why "welfare" calls to mind poor Black people and "inner city" calls to mind poor Black neighborhoods; and explaining how race could so easily be talked *around* at a vigil commemorating some of the most racially contentious deaths Baton Rouge has experienced in decades.[17] Only by appreciating the range of racial meanings Whites draw from their varied experiences of race, class, and geography—while also appreciating that these meanings are conditioned by Whites' common location in the American racial hierarchy—can we appreciate the endurance of the color line.

In sum, this thesis shows that the color line endures not because it is rigid, but because it is flexible. We will be limited in our understanding of its persistence today, let alone its capacity to harden in some places or to be dismantled in others, if we do not take seriously its capacity to bend.

1.1 Tracing the Color Line

Mapping the activation of Whites' racialized policy preferences requires moving beyond *what* Whites think about Blacks, to instead consider *when*, *where*, and *how* Whites are likely to respond in defense of their racial group interests. The remainder of this chapter addresses each of these in turn. In the process, I detail the deficiencies in existing approaches to studying White racial attitudes and summarize the contributions of this thesis.

To answer "when," I draw upon structural theories of prejudice that analyze White racial attitudes as a product of Whites' location in the racial hierarchy. To answer "where," I bring the insights of structural approaches to bear in identifying the shortcomings of the racial threat hypothesis. And to explain "how," I outline my approach to studying the relationship between attitudes and geography before introducing my three case studies—which together document the responsiveness and resilience of the color line.

17. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 64.

1.1.1 When: On race and power

I start from a simple premise: Whites have an interest in racial politics. Of course, it can often seem like they do not. The tradition of identifying, in neutral terms, a "dilemma" when it comes to race in the United States has long minimized the violently ascriptive capacity of American liberalism to exclude Blacks, along with many other groups, and to make racism seem like a peripheral issue.[18] This minimization takes on physical form in the residential segregation of Blacks, which not only has facilitated harsh inequalities but also has given Whites little personal investment in the wellbeing of the Black minority.[19] As Black writer Zack Linly says of Whites who seem either oblivious to or undisturbed by the unequal treatment and opportunities Blacks receive: "[Whites], both figuratively and literally, have no skin in the game."[20]

If we flip the perspective, however, it is clear Whites *do* have skin in the game of racial politics—specifically, an interest in legitimating and defending their historic place at the top of the American racial hierarchy. Rather than a dilemma that came from nowhere, Black scholars have long pointed out that it is from *Whites'* perspective that Black bodies represent the "Negro problem"— a problem that, as James Baldwin once put it, "a guilty and constricted white imagination has assigned to the blacks" rather than to those who structurally benefit.[21] In other words, responsibility for addressing a problem resulting from White dominance is all too easily deferred to Blacks themselves. It is by

18. Gunnar Myrdal famously identified an American dilemma, but many authors in the Toquevillian tradition have played into minimizing America's transgressions. See Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York; London: Harper & Brothers, 1944) and Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1955). This critique of Myrdal, Hartz, and others is incisively made by Rogers M. Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America," *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 549–566.

Some comparative democracy scholars also have taken these aberrations seriously, suggesting pushing back the date of America's democratization to the abolition of slavery (see Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, vol. 268 (Beacon Press, 1966)) or even the Civil Rights Movement (see Göran Therborn, "The Rule of Capital and the Rise of Democracy," *New Left Review* 103, no. 103 (1977): 3–41). Another reference putting American democratization in comparative perspective comes from Desmond King et al., *Democratization in America: A Comparative-Historical Analysis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

19. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 160.

20. Zack Linly, "Why It's Time Black People Simply Disengage with White People in Discussing Race," *Thought for Food*, August 2016, https://thoughtforfood.live/2016/08/16/why-its-time-black-people-simply-disengage-with-white-people-in-discussing-race/.

21. Baldwin makes this comment in the unfinished manuscript that inspired Raoul Peck's documentary, *I Am Not Your Negro*. One of the first formulations of this theme, however, comes from Du Bois's famous articulation of the question he felt was on the tip of the tongue of any White who saw him: "how does it feel to be a problem?" (See W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago, IL: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 4.) Du Bois's explicit aim in *The Souls of Black Folk* was that his White readers understand that this problem, "the strange meaning of being Black," should be of interest to them, too. That, after all, was why "the problem of the Twentieth Century" for Whites and Blacks alike would be "the problem of the color-line."

recognizing that Whites participate in and benefit from this process that this thesis shows the color line's potential to bend toward greater inclusion or exclusion, as well as shows the limitations of the White perspective to understand, analyze, or change the racial hierarchy.

I therefore follow the tradition of research that emphasizes Whites' protectiveness of their racial group interests and takes a socio-structural approach to analyzing White racial attitudes. Examples of this approach include the group position model,[22] the realistic group conflict model,[23] social dominance theory,[24] and earlier hegemony models,[25] all of which share the same basic tenets: societies are stratified into groups; politics puts these groups into competition for scare resources, opportunities, and symbolic capital; and ideological arguments serve as instruments in this competition. Such group-level dynamics are meaningful for an analysis of individuals' opinions on the grounds that individuals draw a meaningful "social identity" from group membership and will seek to enhance or maintain their group's status.[26]

Some authors stop at social identity, and the social affinity extended to other members of one's group, to explain phenomena like White opposition to policies believed to disproportionately benefit Blacks. Social affinity is also a key concept in literature explaining how attitudes on redistribution are shaped by the racial identity of potential beneficiaries.[27] However, Whites' preferences for members of their own race cannot be separated from the dynamics that assign meaning to racial categories, or that create and sustain racial categories to begin with. The maintenance of the American racial order is a question not just of affinity, but also of power.

In recent years, the racial power imbalance has become more obvious as greater attention has been drawn to one of its most visceral consequences: the staggering amount of violence to which Blacks in America are exposed. This goes beyond the much-publicized deaths of Alton Sterling

22. Blumer, "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position."

23. Lawrence Bobo, "Whites' Opposition to Busing: Symbolic Racism or Realistic Group Conflict?," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45, no. 6 (1983): 1196–1210.

24. Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto, *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

25. Antonio Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

26. Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* 33, no. 47 (1979): 74.

27. This work includes approaches explaining White opposition to redistribution in the United States, where race and poverty are correlated; see Alberto Alesina and Edward Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Literature in political economy has also used social affinity to explain how inequality between groups, such as racial groups, shapes redistributive preferences. See Rodney E. Hero and Morris E. Levy, "The Racial Structure of Inequality: Consequences for Welfare Policy in the United States," *Social Science Quarterly*, 2017, and, more generally, Noam Lupu and Jonas Pontusson, "The Structure of Inequality and the Politics of Redistribution," *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 2 (2011): 316–336.

and other men, women, and children at the hands of state actors. If a basic function of the state is to protect its citizens from danger, then, as Lisa Miller argues, the high rates of *civilian* violence to which Blacks are exposed, and not just the high number of Black deaths as a result of state actions, are an instance of racialized (and arguably also gendered) state failure.[28] And beyond direct, physical violence—inferior schools, neighborhoods, health care, employment conditions, and other services unduly shape the lives of Blacks, and ultimately help explain Black mortality rates that are 40% higher than the mortality rates of Whites.[29]

My point is not to challenge a focus on White attitudes—this being the very focus I take up in this thesis.[30] Instead, I challenge the frequent failure to clarify that a crucial reason for studying White racial attitudes in the first place is Whites' disproportionate power relative to Blacks'. I therefore seek to keep the material consequences of the color line from fading into the background, which means keeping in mind the vantage point from which White attitudes are expressed (and often, analyzed).

Scholarship reaching beyond theories of prejudice informs my analysis of White attitudes as a product of Whites' dominant position in a world organized by race. That race is an organizing principle in the first place has been illuminated by work such as Michael Omi and Howard Winant's theory of "racial formation," which argues that race is a "central axis of social relations" in both the micro sense (i.e. in individual identity formation) and the macro sense (i.e. in the formation of groups and social structures).[31] The centrality of race in structuring politics, too, has been demonstrated by Desmond King and Rogers Smith, who show how political institutions and actors

28. Lisa L. Miller, "What's Violence Got to Do with It? Inequality, Punishment, and State Failure in US Politics," *Punishment & Society* 17, no. 2 (2015): 184–210. For further insight into the consequences of violence in the domestic sphere, particularly for Black women, see Shatema Threadcraft, *Intimate Justice: The Black Female Body and the Body Politic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

29. Anne Case and Angus Deaton, "Rising Morbidity and Mortality in Midlife among White Non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st Century," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 49 (2015): 15078–15083. It is striking, though not surprising, that this mortality gap persists even after the recent discovery of rising mortality among Whites (largely due to drug and alcohol poisoning). News of the reversal of direction in the trend of White mortality far overshadowed attention given to the persistent racial gap: that Black lives are shorter is the norm.

30. I do, however, go against the trend of White scholars studying White racial attitudes and Black scholars studying Black politics—which Michael Dawson calls indicative of a "racial separatism" in the field (see Michael C. Dawson, "Slowly Coming to Grips with the Effects of the American Racial Order on American Policy Preferences," in *Racialized Politics: The Debate About Racism in America*, ed. David O. Sears, Jim Sidanius, and Lawrence Bobo (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)). The significance of my race as a Black researcher is further discussed in Appendix D.

31. Emphasis in original. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*, 61, 4.

have consistently organized themselves around shared "racial concepts, commitments, and aims" to form two evolving "racial institutional orders" throughout American political development.[32]

For both Omi and Winant and King and Smith, racism does not present an exception to the normal functioning of society, nor is race reducible to another social category. Consequently, the power associated with Whiteness stretches across the spectrum of Whites' class identities. David Roediger supports this argument by showing how the psychological and material "wages" of Whiteness have been as central to the identity formation of the White working class as the White elite.[33] Scholarship on the Black middle class has similarly highlighted how race structures Blacks' social and political position, even as a Black household's economic capital increases.[34] (To be clear: this thesis does not engage in class analysis. My use of the term "class" more broadly references economic position as measured by income and/or wealth—this being the practical definition of class in most debates over the relative importance of class and race as social categories.)

Further support for my understanding that White attitudes reflect the *view* from their racial position comes from standpoint theory—which critiques the idea that dominant viewpoints are ever value-neutral, as opposed to reflecting the dominant group's own interests.[35] Similarly, when philosopher Charles Mills points out that at the core of White dominance is an "epistemology of ignorance"—an agreement to *mis*perceive the world—he reminds us that, much like the Negro problem has been constructed through the eyes of Whites, power brings the luxury of deciding what is seen and how.[36]

In sum, socio-structural, group-based theories of prejudice inform "when" Whites are likely to respond with amplified, racialized attitudes: when they sense a challenge to their dominant position. At the same time, these theories provide a firm foundation for moving beyond whether Whites are racist and toward my investigation of the myriad opinions White Americans express from their position at the top of the racial hierarchy. By emphasizing the multidimensional nature

32. Desmond S. King and Rogers M. Smith, "Racial Orders in American Political Development," *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 1 (2005): 75. For a broader discussion of how discussion of race has been brought into (though often still treated as anomalous) in scholarship on American political development, see Kimberley S. Johnson, "The Color Line and the State: Race and American Political Development," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*, ed. Richard Valelly, Suzanne Mettler, and Robert Lieberman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

33. David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (Verso, 1999).

34. Intra-race inequality is higher for Blacks than for any other group, as measured by the Gini coefficient (based on data from the Census Bureau/Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis as of September 2017; see https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GINIBAF). Literature on how racial categorization still constrains the experiences of Blacks in higher income brackets is discussed further in Chapter 4.

35. Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*.

36. Charles Wade Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Cornell University Press, 1997).

of prejudice, a socio-structural approach allows me to analyze the broad range of White attitudes toward Blacks in the present day, and to identify how these attitudes respond to contexts that are multidimensional, too. However, rather than setting myself against scholarship on the individual-level psychology of racism (as many scholars taking a socio-structural approach do), I instead integrate individual-level theories into my analysis as a source of insight into the dimensions along which White attitudes vary.[37]

Thus, throughout the thesis I operationalize multiple measures of Whites' racial orientations, all of which emanate from Whites' structural location in the racial hierarchy. To do so, I draw upon Blumer's classic work on prejudice as "a sense of group position"—often cited but not engaged with in considerable detail.[38] Blumer identifies four component "feelings" that tend to be present in a dominant group, emanating from its position in relation to a subordinate group. I propose organizing these into two categories. First are feelings primarily concerned with an *outgroup*—a belief that the subordinate race is inherently different or alien, and fear or suspicion directed toward the subordinate race. Second are the feelings primarily concerned with the *ingroup*—a sense of superiority, and a feeling of entitlement to certain privileges.

Table 1.1: Feelings of Prejudice Comprising the Sense of Group Position

Ingroup-oriented	**Outgroup-oriented**
"a feeling of superiority"	"a feeling that the subordinate race is intrinsically different"
"a feeling of proprietary claim to certain areas of privilege and advantage"	"a fear and suspicion that the subordinate race harbors designs on the prerogatives of the dominant race"

As articulated in Blumer (1958) "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position."

37. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, for example, takes a strictly materialist approach based on the premise that those at the top of the racial hierarchy generally will try to preserve the status quo and those at the bottom, to oppose it; see Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006). More broadly, scholarship in the group-conflict/hierarchy school is critical of using individual-level concepts such as symbolic racism, Donald Kinder and David Sears's name for old-fashioned racism mixed with American values, to explain White policy preferences. For a classic critique, see Bobo, "Whites' Opposition to Busing: Symbolic Racism or Realistic Group Conflict?"

38. There are obvious exceptions to this, such as in the work of Lawrence Bobo, e.g. Lawrence Bobo and Vincent L. Hutchings, "Perceptions of Racial Group Competition: Extending Blumer's Theory of Group Position to a Multiracial Social Context," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 6 (1996): 951 and Lawrence Bobo and Camille L. Zubrinsky, "Attitudes on Residential Integration: Perceived Status Differences, Mere In-Group Preference, or Racial Prejudice?," *Social Forces* 74, no. 3 (1996): 883–909. In much literature, however, it is common to nod to Blumer in the opening paragraphs of a study but minimally discuss the mechanics of his argument.

I am far from the first to recognize this duality of prejudice. In particular, the study of Whites' racial identity has shown that anti-Black animus is not necessary for the reproduction of White privilege or racial inequality.[39] Yet, few consider how the two dimensions of prejudice operate together. I therefore offer a novel approach that identifies how either ingroup- *or* outgroup-oriented feelings might be activated as a situational response to a perceived challenge to a dominant group's interests. My core goal is not to adjudicate between various measures of prejudice, but instead to identify common dynamics in the *operation* of these attitudes, shedding light on how they can recede in some instances but be amplified in others. This leads me to the next part of my guide to tracing the contemporary color line: identifying the instances in which certain attitudes are likely to be more influential, according to where Whites live.

1.1.2 Where: Connecting prejudice to place

The concept of threat is of obvious relevance to socio-structural theories of prejudice: we anticipate Whites to feel threatened by potential challenges to their dominant position. The rhetoric of threat is more closely linked, however, to a seminal theory about the relevance of geography to racial politics.

The racial threat hypothesis, briefly introduced above, has its origins in V.O. Key's 1949 study finding that White political participation in the South (almost exclusively in support of the segregationist Southern Democrats) was highest in counties with the largest Black populations.[40] Key identified an "intense political consciousness" among these Black-belt Whites as a result of their fear of Black empowerment. He theorized that the "symbolic potency" of a Black population motivated Whites to vote, rather than the realistic electoral threat Blacks posed to Whites: Blacks

39. An essay often credited for turning Whites' own attention inward is Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States: An Integrated Study* 4 (1988): 165–169, followed by the foundational work of Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). One strand of work following in this tradition looks at the rhetoric of colorblindnesss and the denial of racism. See, for example, Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*; Charles A. Gallagher, "'The End of Racism' as the New Doxa: New Strategies for Researching Race," chap. 10 in *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 163–178; and Nancy DiTomaso, *The American Non-Dilemma: Racial Inequality without Racism* (New York : Russell Sage Foundation, 2013). A closer focus on how White identity shapes White understandings of the racial landscape comes from Joe R. Feagin, *The White Racial Frame: Centuries of Racial Framing and Counter-Framing* (Routledge, 2013).

40. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*.

were broadly disenfranchised at the time. And in any case, Key noted that "in no state would Negro voting produce 'black supremacy.'"[41]

A long line of research has followed. Hubert Blalock argued that the threat posed by a non-White population could be economic (presenting competition for jobs), political (presenting an electoral challenge), or symbolic (manifesting deviant behavior)—although Blalock is best known for using the relative size of a minority population as an indicator of the magnitude of threat.[42] Literature following this approach has subsequently identified a threat response in the form of White electoral support for anti-Black[43] or anti-redistributive candidates,[44] as well as in the form of amplified anti-Black animus among Whites.[45] Other literature has specified the economic dimensions of threat, arguing that where resources are scarcer, race relations are more likely to seem like a zero-sum game. Lincoln Quillian, for example, takes a cross-national approach to demonstrate that national economic conditions, in addition to the size of a minority group, predict levels of prejudice among majority group members.[46] Recent studies place even more emphasis on economic context—whether as a more significant factor than racial context,[47] or a key moderator of the relationship between racial context and White attitudes.[48]

These insights suggest an answer to "where" we should look for the activation of Whites' racialized policy preferences: in settings where either a relatively large Black population is present,

41. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, 646.

42. Blalock, *Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations*.

43. Micheal W. Giles and Melanie A. Buckner, "David Duke and Black Threat: An Old Hypothesis Revisited," *Journal of Politics* 55, no. 03 (1993): 702. But, for a critique, see also D. Stephen Voss, "Beyond Racial Threat: Failure of an Old Hypothesis in the New South," *Journal of Politics* 58, no. 4 (1996): 1156.

44. Eitan D. Hersh and Clayton Nall, "The Primacy of Race in the Geography of Income-Based Voting: New Evidence from Public Voting Records," *American Journal of Political Science* 60, no. 2 (2016): 289–303.

45. Mark A. Fossett and K. Jill Kiecolt, "The Relative Size of Minority Populations and White Racial Attitudes," *Social Science Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (1989): 820–835; Micheal W. Giles, "Percent Black and Racial Hostility: An Old Assumption Reexamined," *Social Science Quarterly* 58, no. 3 (1977): 412–417; Marylee C. Taylor, "How White Attitudes Vary with the Racial Composition of Local Populations: Numbers Count," *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 4 (1998): 512.

46. Lincoln Quillian, "Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat: Population Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe," *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 4 (1995): 586.

47. J. Eric Oliver and Tali Mendelberg, "Reconsidering the Environmental Determinants of White Racial Attitudes," *American Journal of Political Science* 44, no. 3 (2000): 574–589.

48. Regina P. Branton and Bradford S. Jones, "Reexamining Racial Attitudes: The Conditional Relationship between Diversity and Socioeconomic Environment," *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 2 (2005): 359–372.

or where economic resources (likely related to the policy at hand) are scarce.[49]

Yet, several complications remain. For one, investigating the relationship between local geographic context and political behavior has always posed challenges for drawing causal inferences. A perennial concern is whether living in a certain place leads Whites to think or act a certain way, or if self-selection or local culture and history explain why Whites in certain places share certain perspectives. Newer research taking advantage of exogenous shocks to an area's racial composition has supported the claim that changes in context do affect attitudes, at least under certain conditions.[50] When it comes to longstanding patterns in racial geography, however, the distribution of Blacks and Whites across contexts is far from "as-if random." Rather than try to explain context *causing* anything, therefore, I offer an approach to identifying systematic variation in where and how racial orientations are most likely to affect Whites' policy preferences.

Another complication presented by the racial threat hypothesis concerns whether the patterns scholars claim to identify in Whites' behavior are overly sensitive to the level at which "local" is measured. Addressing this issue requires both methodological and theoretical attention. In methodological terms, the "modifiable areal unit problem" (MAUP) refers to the danger that a relationship identified between context and outcomes is a product of the shape and scale of the geographic container used.[51] While I primarily operationalize context at the metropolitan area, I also investigate variation at the county and congressional district level in order to account for the MAUP (and to replicate my results across datasets). As for the theoretical dimension of operationalizing locality, some authors argue that the geography in which racial or economic conditions matter should be the same geography within which the benefits of a given policy are

49. Diverse settings do not always lead to negative outcomes—something I seek to account for in my application of the threat hypothesis, which identifies the possible amplification of racially tolerant attitudes. This thesis lacks scope, however, to evaluate the "racial contact" hypothesis, which holds that in situations where groups are of equal status, have common goals, and receive institutional support for cooperation, benefits follow from interracial interaction. See Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1954). Assessing the contact hypothesis would require a different approach to that taken here: my analysis does not allow for measures of sustained, interpersonal interaction but rather focuses on how the salience of race or certain economic conditions in Whites' surroundings contextualizes the process by which Whites express preferences.

50. See Ryan D. Enos, "What the Demolition of Public Housing Teaches Us about the Impact of Racial Threat on Political Behavior," *American Journal of Political Science* 60, no. 1 (2016): 123–142; Daniel J. Hopkins, "Flooded Communities: Explaining Local Reactions to the Post-Katrina Migrants," *Political Research Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2012): 443–459. In a similar vein, Hopkins has demonstrated greater sensitivity to changes in one's racial surroundings than to absolute levels. See Daniel J. Hopkins, "Politicized Places: Explaining Where and When Immigrants Provoke Local Opposition," *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 1 (2010): 40–60. Hopkins focuses on sensitivity to immigrant communities. Although I explore dynamic measures of context at points throughout the thesis, Hopkins's approach is less appropriate to study the Black-White color line given the relatively static size of the Black population.

51. A. Stewart Fotheringham and David W. S. Wong, "The Modifiable Areal Unit Problem in Multivariate Statistical Analysis," *Environment and Planning* 23, no. 7 (1991): 1025–1044.

distributed.[52] On the contrary, I choose to focus on the metropolitan area as a proxy for White individuals' general milieu—the area throughout which they move on a daily basis, and in which they are likely to be aware of current events, racial demographics, and economic conditions. More than simply debating how to measure geography, my interest in what contexts are likely to comprise Whites' field of vision brings me to a third issue with the racial threat hypothesis—one that informs my central critique of it.

This third complication relates to the question of whether Whites actually perceive the contextual cues that scholars use to operationalize threat—a crucial assumption in much of the literature on racial threat that is rarely tested. Recent work by Benjamin Newman et al. suggests that people are indeed perceptive of factors such as immigration levels and unemployment in their ZIP codes and counties.[53] The research of Cara Wong and coauthors, on the other hand, identifies the disjuncture between what an officially-defined context (e.g. census tract or county) contains and what people perceive, particularly when it comes to racial demographics.[54]

I draw on both these insights, expecting Whites to be aware of their surroundings on some objective level, but also recognizing the inevitable subjectivity in how all individuals interpret the world around them. However, Whites' perspective is not merely subjective, as would be the perspective of any group. Whites' perspective further is shaped by Whites' position in the racial hierarchy—meaning they view racial politics from a privileged position.

To be fair, many applications of the racial threat hypothesis at least implicitly recognize White subjectivity. For example, the common approach of analyzing racial threat as a function of Whites' psychology (rather than an instrumental or pragmatic response) is broadly consistent with Key's original argument that fear led Whites to exaggerate the true threat posed by a

52. See, for example, J. Eric Oliver, "City Size and Civic Involvement in Metropolitan America," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000): 361–373.

53. Benjamin J. Newman et al., "Are Citizens "Receiving the Treatment"? Assessing a Key Link in Contextual Theories of Public Opinion and Political Behavior," *Political Psychology* 36, no. 1 (2015): 123–131.

54. Wong's research links the subjectivity of people's perceptions of their contexts, as well as understandings of what "local" means, to the often contradictory findings of scholarship on racial threat. For example, Wong et al. suggest that "overestimates of the size of outgroups at larger contextual units relative to misperceptions at smaller units is what leads to a greater sense of threat in the more aggregated levels"—whereas in smaller units, more positive benefits of living in diverse settings have been identified. See Cara Wong et al., "Does the Context Fit the Outcome?: When (or Where) Racial Context Should Affect Politics" (2012); Cara Wong et al., "Bringing the Person Back In: Boundaries, Perceptions, and the Measurement of Racial Context," *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 4 (2012): 1153–1170.

nearby Black population.[55] But the literature is rarely explicit about the privileged position from which Whites perceive a threat.[56] By extension, it typically ignores that racial politics is, to most Whites, a spectacle.

Originally defined by critical theorist Guy Debord as "a social relation between people that is mediated by images," the concept of a spectacle has best been connected to politics by Murray Edelman.[57] Political issues often deeply engage our attention and emotions—largely thanks to images in media and political communication—even when an issue has little material impact on our lives.[58]

It is hard to imagine Whites' relationship to Blacks without the mediating role of imagery. Imagery has been central to the racialization of geography: associations between concentrated urban poverty and Blackness have created an "iconic ghetto" that exists in the minds of Whites.[59] Imagery also has been crucial in the racialization of politics—for example, in the construction of poverty assistance, when referred to as "welfare," as spending that benefits "lazy Blacks" at the cost of Whites.[60] Welfare also is linked to other racial spectacles, such as crime. The simultaneous racialized (and gendered) processes of retrenching the welfare state and expanding the carceral state not only were deeply intertwined, but also were addressing problems characterized as coming from the same place: the Black (or Latino) urban ghetto.[61]

More broadly, imagery of Blackness evokes the theme of visibility—or invisibility—that was referenced in the opening of this chapter and that has been core to Black literary, scholarly, and artistic traditions. Du Bois first identified Whites' inability to see Blacks in *The Souls of Black Folk*, a theme vividly developed by Ellison in *Invisible Man*. Never meant to imply that Whites

55. See Enos, "What the Demolition of Public Housing Teaches Us about the Impact of Racial Threat on Political Behavior," 125-126. An explicit statement of this point also comes from Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders, who argue: "Threat is not so much a clear-eyed perception as it is an emotion-laden attitude." Kinder and Sanders still use passive language, however, when they explain that racially prejudiced Whites simply "are predisposed" to be threatened. Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 90.

56. Consider Hersh and Nall, "The Primacy of Race in the Geography of Income-Based Voting: New Evidence from Public Voting Records." These authors examine registered voters of all races when arguing that local racial context conditions the link between income and partisanship. However, they repeatedly refer to "Americans" and "citizens," and are tentative in stating their finding that *White* party identification varies across local context. Specifically, affluent Whites are more Republican in proximity to poor Blacks, whereas only the *presence* of reliably Democratic Black voters varies across context.

57. Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle (The Society of the Spectacle)* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967).

58. Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

59. Elijah Anderson, "The Iconic Ghetto," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 642, no. 1 (2012): 8–24.

60. Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Anti-Poverty Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

61. Julilly Kohler-Hausmann, *Getting Tough: Welfare and Imprisonment in 1970s America*, vol. 3, 3 (Princeton University Press, 2017).

did not *notice* Blacks, invisibility has been used to explain how Blacks have been constructed by Whites, as images that tell us more about Whites' own fears and insecurities than about Blacks themselves.[62] In the White gaze, Blackness can be hyper-visible at the same time as ignored. As writer and artist Claudia Rankine has lamented, "No amount of visibility will alter the ways in which one is perceived," recognizing the futility of attempting to perform to White expectations.[63]

Because with Whiteness comes power, including the power to dictate what is visible and how it appears, it is crucial to appreciate that what Whites believe to be real, or their perceptions of their surroundings, will be shaped by the vantage point from which Whites view racial politics. I therefore investigate "where" Whites are likely to express racialized preferences with the intent of capturing Whites' field of vision. This means recognizing that the metropolitan area can form the backdrop against which White Americans express policy preferences, even if the metropolitan area at times is not the geography in which the benefits of a particular policy are competed over. This also means recognizing the powerful effects of racial segregation, a system built and maintained primarily by Whites, to shape the landscape of a city. And finally, it means recognizing Whites' role in actively constructing a threat rather than being passively threatened.

I follow the convention in the literature of using Black population share to measure racial context. However, most uses of Black population share as a proxy for threat are uncritical about positing nearby Black bodies as "expressions of intent to inflict evil, injury, or harm," while Whites are innocent and vulnerable.[64] *Black* residents of counties with the highest support for the Southern Democrats in Key's original study were undoubtedly at greater risk of suffering racialized harm than were the Whites who were "threatened" by the local Black population—as Key himself acknowledged. But the typical construction of the racial threat hypothesis fails to engage with this power imbalance. It instead defers to the "fragility" of the White psyche by tacitly characterizing them as victims of a threat.[65]

62. This theme runs throughout the work of James Baldwin—the concept of a Negro existing to serve Whites' own psychological needs. An illustrative quote comes from James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction, 1948-1985* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 238. He writes, "The country's image of the Negro, which hasn't very much to do with the Negro, has never failed to reflect, with frightening accuracy, the state of mind of the country."

63. Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Graywolf Press, 2014), 24.

64. This is Merriam-Webster's definition of "threat."

65. Robin DiAngelo defines White fragility as the product of Whites living in an "insulated environment of racial protection, [which] builds white expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress" (54). DiAngelo also notes the habit of Whites citing concerns about their safety when their Whiteness is challenged, tapping into stereotypes of Blacks as violent, and perverting the reality that Blacks have suffered profoundly more violence at the hands of Whites. See Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3, no. 3 (2011): 54–70. This dynamic is evident in the typical rhetoric used in regard to racial threat.

I do not dismiss the value of the psychological mechanism of threat in understanding racial politics. As I have said, the fundamental idea that Whites will defend their dominant position implies that perceived challenges to that position will be accompanied by feelings of threat. I do, however, assign Whites responsibility for the construal of threat, drawing on standpoint theory's fundamental point that no vision is neutral: everything is seen from somewhere.[66]

Besides rejecting the equation of Blackness with threat, my approach also adds depth to Whites' views. I recognize that not all Whites will see a Black population as threatening, and that Whites will bring a variety of attitudes to bear in light of salient features of their surroundings. This brings me to the final step of my guide to tracing the color line—elaborating how I find Whites' racialized preferences to be activated across time and place.

1.1.3 How: The situational activation of racialized behavior

In discussing "when" and "where," I have surveyed theories explaining Whites' political behavior as shaped by both a proclivity to defend their dominant position, and by concerns in Whites' local surroundings. Current scholarship either (a) fails to address the color line's flexibility, by not theorizing either the range of feelings that might be activated in defense of Whites' group interests, or the range of possible responses by Whites in a given geographic context; or (b) fails to explain the line's endurance, by assigning neutrality to the White perspective, and consequently minimizing the power imbalance at the core of racial politics. There is thus a need for an approach to studying racialized attitudes that can map the color line's contours. I address this by charting "how" racialized political behavior is situationally activated among Whites who hold varied racial attitudes, and live in varied contexts of racial and economic diversity across the United States.

I understand racial attitudes to be activated when they are readily accessible, or more easily called to mind, and thus likely to influence Whites' other political opinions.[67] This understanding draws on the insights of political psychological literature on racial priming, which shows that racial attitudes are more influential in political decision-making when someone is exposed to a

66. Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*.

67. For further discussion on the activation of prejudice, see Nicholas J. G. Winter, *Dangerous Frames: How Ideas about Race and Gender Shape Public Opinion* (University of Chicago Press, 2008). Although focused on authoritarianism rather than prejudice per se, another valuable theorization of the responsiveness of attitudes to threatening situations is Karen Stenner, *The Authoritarian Dynamic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

stimulus related to race.[68] Applying these insights to a study of geographic variation in White public opinion, I posit local geography as indicative of the stimuli related to race and class that are present in a White individual's surroundings.

Local geography therefore serves as a source of "contextual information" for the Whites I analyze, to use John Zaller's term.[69] Whereas Zaller posits an individual's level of political knowledge as reflective of the (objective) information one possesses, I instead posit racial and economic surroundings as reflective of the (subjective) understanding that individual is likely to have of the status of the races in a given local context. In other words, local geography tells us about the landscape viewed by Whites when they take stock of their surroundings, or, as Walter Lippmann famously said, the "different worlds" in which Whites live.[70]

I recognize that local geography is only one factor that might serve as a source of information about issues related to race and class. It is possible that racial attitudes would be activated through other avenues, although these lie beyond the scope of the thesis.[71]

1.2 Empirical Case Studies

On the grounds that Whites will defend their racial group's privileged position; that Whites will view their geographic surroundings from this position; and that Whites' orientations toward Blacks are likely to be responsive to those surroundings— this thesis shows when, where, and how Whites' racial orientations influence their political behavior over the course of three empirical case studies.

I focus on Whites' behavior in terms of the policy preferences they express. With access to the location files of the General Social Survey (GSS), I am able to analyze Whites' preferences in two archetypal racial policy arenas—welfare spending and affirmative action—-in light of where

68. Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Nicholas A. Valentino, Vincent L. Hutchings, and Ismail K. White, "Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes during Campaigns," *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 1 (2002): 75–90.

69. John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 25.

70. Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 1922).

71. An obvious factor to note here is the media (and relatedly, political narratives that appear in media coverage). Each of my case studies focuses on a policy area that was salient during the time period being studied, in recognition of Hopkins's argument on the intersecting influence of national and local conditions to construe outgroups as threatening. (See Hopkins, "Politicized Places: Explaining Where and When Immigrants Provoke Local Opposition.") Further work, however, could take a closer look at variation in media coverage across places, or media consumption across people.

White individuals live across the United States. These quantitative analyses are supplemented by data from the American National Election Study (ANES), and comprise my first two case studies, reported in Parts I and II of the thesis. My third study then presents qualitative analysis of 48 in-depth interviews conducted in Baton Rouge, LA, reported in Part III. These interviews were conducted in the wake of the unexpected deaths of Sterling and the officers in July 2016—but my choice of Baton Rouge as field site was previously motivated by an ongoing, racialized fight over the local control of schools in East Baton Rouge Parish.

Table 1.2: Overview of Empirical Case Studies

Part	Chapters	Case Study	Policy Area	Data
I	Ch. 2-3	*Racialized Preferences in Context: The Geography of White Opposition to Welfare*	Welfare spending	2000 GSS (n = 1,569) 2000 ANES (n = 1,393)
II	Ch. 4-5	*Redistributing Privilege: Racial Threat and Opposition to Affirmative Action*	Affirmative action	2006-10 GSS panel (n = 1,107) 2016 ANES (n = 3,038)
III	Ch. 6-7	*The View from the Top: How Whites Maintain the Racial Order in a Louisiana City*	School desegregation and municipal incorporation	Interviews conducted in Baton Rouge, LA, in 2016 (n = 48)

My quantitative analysis is primarily driven by data from the GSS which locates White respondents in their respective metropolitan areas. Data from the ANES, locating respondents in congressional districts, is used to replicate my findings from Part I (as reported in Chapter 3) and Part II (as summarized in Chapter 5 and reported in detail in Appendix C).

By tracing the color line as it bends across time and place, my case studies serve the two overarching aims of this thesis—to reformulate the racial threat hypothesis, and to do so by challenging the power-evasive ways in which Whites' perception of threat is typically theorized. Each study serves the first aim by synthesizing the insights of the group position and racial threat frameworks. Specifically, each part reveals the multidimensionality of prejudice as a mix of feelings associated with Whites' dominant position, and further shows how these orientations are brought to bear on Whites' policy preferences across contexts. Each study serves the second aim by foregrounding Whites' positionality in perceiving their surroundings; expressing (or rejecting) prejudicial attitudes; and forming policy preferences.

The remainder of this section summarizes each of the case studies in greater detail, discusses how each furthers the aims of the thesis, and considers the limitations of the research presented here.

1.2.1 Part I: Local context, White racial attitudes, and opposition to welfare

Part I lays a foundation for understanding the situational activation of racialized policy preferences by focusing on welfare spending in the years following the 1996 reforms, which sought to "end welfare as we know it" but failed to de-racialize welfare policy.[72] Because of welfare's racial connotations, opposition to welfare spending among Whites is widely understood to be influenced by Whites' racial prejudices. Yet, this conventional wisdom ignores the importance of local geography in determining whether welfare is likely to be viewed in racialized terms.

In Part I, I demonstrate that the effect of prejudice on Whites' welfare preferences depends on the salience of welfare's racialized image in a given geographic context. I present a novel application of the racial threat hypothesis—conceptualizing both prejudice and place as multidimensional—to argue that the *racial* geography of an area amplifies the effect of traditional racial stereotypes on welfare preferences; whereas *economic* geography amplifies the effect of racially resentful attitudes.

My analysis reveals that racial attitudes are more predictive of welfare preferences not simply where the stigmas of welfare are salient due to a large Black population or high poverty rate, but more specifically where patterns of residential segregation make Black or poor households more visible from the viewpoint of Whites.[73] Moreover, while the majority of Whites express greater opposition to welfare spending in response to the heightened visibility of race or poverty, Whites with racially tolerant attitudes are more likely to *support* welfare spending in the same settings perceived to be threatening by racially prejudiced Whites.

Part I shows that conventional theories of welfare preferences as influenced by racial attitudes fail to identify variation in the strength of this relationship across different geographies. By demonstrating the relevance of geography in explaining why we are likely to see more racialized

72. Joe Soss and Sanford F. Schram, "A Public Transformed? Welfare Reform as Policy Feedback," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 1 (2007): 111–127.

73. In Part I, I argue that for a given number of poor households in a metropolitan area, poverty will be most salient when these households are concentrated in poor neighborhoods; for a given number of Black households, race will be most salient when these households are dispersed throughout Whites' neighborhoods. Thus, racial and income segregation have different effects on the salience of poor and Black populations.

opinions in some settings and from some people than others, Part I also offers an approach to modeling the color line's responsiveness. Finally, by identifying the capacity of segregation to make similarly sized populations more or less visible to Whites, Part I indicates that the subjectivity of Whites' understandings of their surroundings plays a role in explaining the color line's resilience.

1.2.2 Part II: Local context, Blacks' economic status, and opposition to affirmative action

Moving beyond Part I's focus on an issue associated with low-status Blacks, Part II considers White attitudes on a policy approach that targets Blacks of various class backgrounds: affirmative action. Part II therefore deepens my investigation of the resilience of the color line, particularly as Blacks' class positions rise. Debates about racial politics often imply that reducing racial inequality and improving race relations are congruent or even interchangeable goals—but Part II demonstrates that Whites respond negatively to economic progress for Blacks when it is perceived to threaten the status of Whites in a given local context.

My analysis in Part II proceeds in two stages. First, I continue to emphasize the variety of feelings Whites bring to bear when evaluating racial policies, but introduce a new measure of Whites' beliefs about race that is more material or descriptive than it is affective or normative: perceptions of how far Blacks lag behind Whites in economic standing. I conceptualize this as a measure of the status threat Blacks are believed to pose to Whites, based on the perceived security of Whites' economic advantage over Blacks.

Through an analysis of White opinion over the course of the 2007-2009 recession, I show that perceptions of a status threat vary systematically according to racial and economic context. Again demonstrating the subjectivity of Whites' perspective, I further show that Whites are most likely to believe Blacks are catching up to Whites economically in places where Whites themselves are likely to feel insecure—namely, in metropolitan areas where unemployment increased most sharply over the recession.

In the second stage of Part II's analysis, I show that perceiving a status threat is predictive of White attitudes on affirmative action. Besides being a policy approach associated with higher-status Blacks, the value of affirmative action to my analysis is that it raises questions not only about

what Blacks stand to gain, but also about what Whites stand to lose. Thus, I find that Whites who perceive a status threat from local Blacks are more opposed to the idea of distributing employment opportunities away from Whites and to Blacks, all else equal. Alternately, Whites who feel their position over Blacks is secure are *less* opposed to affirmative action.

The caveat to this latter finding is that even Whites who do not perceive a status threat are unlikely to support affirmative action if they live in a place where Blacks are of low status in absolute terms—where the Blacks who would benefit from affirmative action are likely to be considered poor and thus "undeserving" beneficiaries. Thus, support for affirmative action is maximized where Blacks are affluent (enough to be considered "respectable" beneficiaries) but Whites are even more so (enough to feel Whites' economic advantage is secure). These findings suggest that improvements in Blacks' economic position may, paradoxically, make Whites more defensive of their privileged status even as it leads them to see Blacks as worthier of support.

Part II highlights the complexity of Whites' group position as comprised of both ingroup- and outgroup-oriented evaluations: affirmative action preferences are shaped not only by Whites' affective feelings toward Blacks, but also by Whites' sense of the security of their privileged position over Blacks. This identification of a status threat offers a fresh perspective on the complicated ways in which Whites are likely to view the Black middle class, and suggests the effects of perceiving a status threat will hold regardless of how tolerant or prejudiced Whites may be.

1.2.3 Part III: School segregation and municipal incorporation: The White perspective in Baton Rouge, LA

In Parts I and II, my analysis of nationally representative survey data reveals systematic variation in Whites' policy preferences according to their local surroundings. I argue that the patterns I identify reflect a range of threat responses in contexts where features of Whites' racial or economic surroundings activate Whites' sense of group position, whether in the form of ingroup or outgroup-oriented feelings of prejudice.

However, a limitation of Parts I and II—and of the literature on racial threat more broadly—is that a quantitative approach requires us to think about both context and attitudes in aggregate terms, examining the preferences of thousands of White Americans living in hundreds of different

metropolitan areas. While valuable, what this approach cannot offer is insight into the micro-dynamics of how Whites' racialized preferences are expressed in everyday life—the everyday workings of the color line. Thus, in Parts I and II, I theorize that Whites construct a version of reality based on their views of their local context; but in Part III, I *show* how Whites do so by taking a deep dive into one specific context: Baton Rouge, LA.

The past several years have seen the rise of a movement by an affluent, predominantly White, and currently unincorporated part of East Baton Rouge Parish to incorporate as its own city, primarily as a route to establish an independent school district. The successful formation of a new city, to be called St. George, would have severe implications for the poorer and Blacker areas of Baton Rouge left behind. The fight over St. George reflects the deeply racialized and economically unequal geography of the area—similar to cities across the country, but exacerbated in Baton Rouge by a federal desegregation lawsuit that lasted almost 50 years, accompanied by considerable White flight. The tragic shootings of July 2016 only threw this spatial inequality into harsher relief.

Part III reports my findings from the 48 in-depth, semi-structured interviews I conducted with individuals both in favor of and against the St. George effort. The topic of the incorporation effort brings up themes similar to those that appear in debates about welfare policy, in the form of White residents' views of Baton Rouge's majority-Black public school system; and themes similar to those that appear in debates about affirmative action, in the form of Whites' ideas about educational opportunities and metropolitan resources to which they feel entitled. Moreover, the heightened salience of race due to the July shootings offered an unexpected, tragic, and theoretically rich background for my research.

My analysis shows how Whites negotiate between both ingroup and outgroup-oriented feelings of prejudice in the present day—working hard not to seem to embrace anti-Black animus, but being less cautious about prioritizing White interests. Although the views of the Whites who fought against St. George illuminate the possibilities of motivating racially tolerant Whites to action, I ultimately find that the White respondents engage in a common set of discursive practices that not only legitimate Whites' privileged position, but also reveal a shared White perspective. Reflections collected from Black residents offer additional support for my argument that a White perspective persists even among Whites with diametrically opposed opinions on race, schooling, segregation, and inequality in Baton Rouge.

Part III therefore shows what activated attitudes look like; the variety of responses we can expect when matters of race are salient; and the color line's ability to stay intact—evident in the constraints of Whites' vision, even among those working to dismantle the line's physical manifestations.

1.3 Contributions and Limitations of the Thesis

Having summarized my three case studies, we can now see in greater depth how each one serves the aims of the thesis—(1) to reinterpret the threat hypothesis, showing the color line's responsiveness; and (2) to identify a shared White perspective, showing the color line's resilience.

Parts I and II serve the first aim by empirically demonstrating the polarization of policy preferences according to Whites' racial attitudes, or their perceptions of the racial order, in the presence of relevant contextual cues. Part III delves deeper by detailing the contours of polarized racial attitudes as they are reproduced in language and action in a specific time and place (in Baton Rouge, and against the backdrop of both the St. George effort and the racialized violence of July 2016). Thus, this thesis reinterprets the threat hypothesis by showing the variety of ways the color line can bend. It also recognizes the complexity of modern America—specifically, the complexity of Whites' racial attitudes and Blacks' class positions. Even more, the thesis integrates new qualitative insight into the typically quantitative scholarly conversation about the geography of racial threat.

My case studies also demonstrate the resilience of the color line. Parts I and II both show that Whites' interpretations of their surroundings are subjective: patterns of segregation affect the salience of race in Part I, whereas anxiety about rising unemployment leads Whites to believe Blacks are getting richer in Part II. Parts II and III further demonstrate how Whites' racial identity shapes their perspectives, even among racially tolerant Whites. In Part II, I find that racially tolerant Whites are equally liable to sense a status threat as racially prejudiced Whites, whereas Part III identifies a common Whiteness of perspective among a polarized sample of White residents of Baton Rouge. Thus, this thesis demonstrates that it is from a subjective and powerful vantage point that Whites view racial politics and often construe Blacks as threatening. Although this point has

previously been made in theoretical terms (e.g. by critical race and standpoint theorists), rarely has it been supported with empirical evidence on the geographic dimensions of threat.

There are many other aims this thesis does not and cannot seek to achieve. For one, I do not dive deeply into questions of partisanship or vote choice, although I do examine how partisanship intersects with racial attitudes over the course of the three studies. More notably, my focus on the Black-White divide necessarily omits an appreciation of the multiethnic diversity of the United States, and risks essentializing "Black" and "White" as fixed categories rather than categories constituted by specific "political, legal, social, and economic identities *at a particular moment in time*."[74] The racial identity of Black Americans has proved to be remarkably durable,[75] and Blacks' experiences of inequality and discrimination remarkably severe.[76] But, the racial categories of Black and White that exist today are neither homogenous nor unchangeable, and continued study of these categories should not lose sight of the larger project of understanding an increasingly diverse American racial order.

Ultimately, the analysis presented here emphasizes the futility of discussing Whites as uniformly racist or anti-racist, rather than inclined to protect their dominant position when needed. My analysis also shifts us from a conversation about Whites being "threatened" by Blacks, to a theorization of how geographic context illuminates the influence of racial attitudes and evaluations on Whites' political behavior. Beyond its specific aims, therefore, this thesis forwards an approach that insists on recognizing the duality of the color line in order to explain its durability.

As I have noted, to emphasize the color line as both attitudinal and material is not new. Douglass himself recognized this duality in his original usage. "The color is innocent enough, but things with which it is coupled make it hated," he writes. "[S]ervility, poverty, dependence, are undesirable conditions. When these shall cease to be coupled with color, there will be no color line drawn."[77]

I mentioned above that much literature in American racial politics operates on a similar optimistic assumption: that material and attitudinal progress will go hand in hand. This is hardly surprising. Seeing racial inequality as a problem meriting social scientific attention, research naturally orients itself toward an end point where skin color does not determine life

74. This definition is drawn from Johnson, "The Color Line and the State: Race and American Political Development," 594. Emphasis added.

75. Ibid.

76. For more on "Black exceptionalism," see David O. Sears and Victoria Savalei, "The Political Color Line in America: Many "Peoples of Color" or Black Exceptionalism?," *Political Psychology* 27, no. 6 (2006): 895–924.

77. Douglass, "The Color Line," 575.

chances. I by no means challenge this ultimate goal. Yet, the analysis presented in this thesis suggests a thornier path ahead than often implied. Even as Blackness slowly dissociates from some of the worst social conditions, and as Whites drop some of their old prejudices, we should expect the color line to put up a fight.

This should be less a pessimistic proclamation than an honest one. Douglass went on to point out the "inconsistencies of the color-line feeling" as evidence of racism's "hollowness."[78] It is hollow indeed, but if we are to have any hope of breaking the color line down, then we must appreciate racism's inconsistencies as part of its strength as well as its vulnerability. This is why I name the color line's flexibility: to identify where it is likely to harden and to keep us vigilant when it seems to have receded, as well as to reveal the potential to help the line bend toward inclusion, and maybe one day break.

This rhetoric recalls a line from St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's 1945 classic, *Black Metropolis*, observing that "[t]he color-line is not static; it bends and buckles and sometimes breaks."[79] Often only this much of the quote is cited, but the authors continue: "This process results in tension; but the very existence of the tension—and even of the violence that sometimes results—is evidence of democracy at work." This thesis's study of the color line, then, might be considered a study of a democracy in progress. For the full inclusion of Blacks is, as Ellison writes, "the most obvious test," and should be the ultimate goal, of American democracy.[80]

1.4 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis proceeds in three parts, coinciding with the three case studies outlined above. Each part opens with a chapter that situates the policy area at hand in relation to the central themes of the thesis, and details my theoretical approach and expectations. The latter chapter of each part reports my empirical findings, whether quantitative insights drawn from survey data in Parts I and II, or qualitative insights drawn from interviews in Part III.

78. Douglass, "The Color Line," 576.
79. St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis* (New York: Harper & Row, 1945), 101.
80. Ralph Ellison, "What America Would Be Like without Blacks," *Going to the Territory*, 1970, 110.

Chapters 2 and 3 comprise my study of racialized welfare preferences. In Chapter 2, I begin by tracing the construction of racial segregation over the course of the 20th century, and the racialization of class as a result, in order to situate White racial attitudes within the segregated landscape of American cities. I further detail the racialization of welfare in media and political discourses, setting the scene of Part I in the year 2000, when tensions had cooled after the heated welfare reform debate of the 1990s but the image of the Black urban poor remained a powerful national symbol of idleness and immorality. Chapter 2 concludes by outlining a model of opposition to welfare shaped by both attitudes and context. Chapter 3 discusses my data and methods; presents evidence from the GSS that racial geography amplifies the effect of traditional prejudice on welfare preferences, whereas economic geography amplifies the effect of racial resentment; and then replicates these findings using the 2000 ANES.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I examine perceptions of the economic status of Blacks and Whites and how these perceptions shape White views on affirmative action. In Chapter 4, I shift focus to Blacks higher up the class ladder, offering a snapshot of the Black middle class and pointing out the typical invisibility of this category in research on White racial attitudes. I then introduce the debate over affirmative action as an illuminative backdrop against which to consider the threat that higher-status Blacks may be perceived to pose to White interests. In Chapter 5, I identify where Whites were likely to perceive a status threat from Blacks over the course of the recession; I then show that perceiving a status threat predicts opposition to affirmative action, alongside conventional predictors. A replication study using the 2016 ANES is discussed in Chapter 5 and reported in Appendix C.

Chapters 6 and 7 report findings from the fieldwork that brought me to Louisiana for the unpredictably tumultuous summer of 2016. In Chapter 6, I trace the emergence of the fight over St. George, which was largely waged as a battle over public school funding—raising a red flag due to Baton Rouge's fraught history with school desegregation. In Chapter 7, I draw on the insights of standpoint theory to document the shared perspective I found among White residents. I present evidence for a White perspective by identifying four discursive practices used across a sample of White interviewees with deeply divergent views about race, politics, and the case of St. George.

In Chapter 8, I reflect on the findings of these three empirical studies, set over 16 years, which together offer a multifaceted view of race relations in contemporary America and suggest challenges as well as possibilities along the road ahead.

Part I

Racialized Preferences in Context: The Geography of White Opposition to Welfare

Introduction to Part I

Few themes have been more central to the work of Black American scholars and authors than Black (in)visibility, and the subjectivity of when and how Blacks are perceived by Whites.[81] To an extent, racial politics scholarship shares this focus. Scholars show how race is strategically rendered invisible, for example, in research on "colorblindness" as either a rhetorical strategy[82] or organizing principle for institutional orders.[83]

Conversely, the capacity of race to be hyper-visible even when unmentioned features in research on the racialization of politics. I have followed other scholars in defining racialization as the process by which certain issues become associated with images and stereotypes of Blacks.[84] As a result of this process, Whites' orientations toward Blacks, referred to as racial attitudes, serve as powerful predictors of White opinion not only on explicitly racial issues, but also on issues implicitly associated with Blacks.[85]

Despite engaging with the constructed nature of racial imagery, political science accounts lack a cogent theorization of Whites' active role in drawing on this imagery to form political preferences. On the one hand, individual-level analyses posit racial attitudes as predictive of Whites' policy preferences, but rarely consider the capacity of racial attitudes either to remain latent or to respond, depending on how Whites view the world around them. On the other hand, contextual models assign importance to what Whites see in their surroundings. Yet, the existing

81. See, for example, Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*; Ellison, *Invisible Man*; James Baldwin, "Stranger in the Village," in *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955); bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1992).

82. Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*.

83. King and Smith, "Racial Orders in American Political Development."

84. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*; Martin Gilens, "'Race Coding' and White Opposition to Welfare," *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 3 (1996): 593–604; Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, "Public Perceptions of Race and Crime: The Role of Racial Stereotypes," *American Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 2 (1997): 375–401.

85. Kinder and Sanders, *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*; Michael Tesler, "The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Racial Attitudes and Race," *American Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 3 (2012): 690–704.

literature uncritically equates a Black population with a "threat" to Whites while downplaying that Whites construe Blacks as threatening through the lens of racial prejudice.

Part I of this thesis offers a novel approach to theorizing how Whites are likely to "see" racial politics, based on where they live and the racial prejudices they hold. I demonstrate that the salience—or rather, the *visibility*—of a racialized issue in Whites' local surroundings is a crucial predictor of the likelihood that Whites draw on their racial attitudes when expressing policy preferences.

I make this argument in regard to welfare spending, a quintessential example of a racialized policy due to its strong associations with negative racial stereotypes.[86] These associations may be supported in part by the burden of poverty among Blacks, but they primarily reflect how welfare has been politicized: as a threat to the way of life of "hardworking Americans"—often assumed to be White—by fueling lifestyles of dependence among the Black, urban poor.[87]

I demonstrate that racial attitudes are more predictive of welfare preferences in metropolitan areas where welfare's racialized image is more visible, due to either a large Black population share or a high poverty rate. More specifically, whether racial or economic geography is relevant depends on the racial attitude in question. The effect of traditional prejudice on welfare preferences is amplified when a proximate Black population raises the salience of race, whereas the effect of racial resentment is heightened in high-poverty settings. In repeating this analysis using measures of racial and income segregation, I further show that the visibility of Black or low-income households is a product not just of their presence, but also of their patterning across a metropolitan area.

These findings shine new light on the dynamics of racial threat as shaped by Whites' individual-level prejudices, as well as by Whites' subjective perceptions of the world. By positing Whites as active perceivers of their surroundings, my analysis also allows for populations seen as threatening by some Whites to be interpreted differently by others. The salience of race or poverty may thus provoke greater *support* for welfare spending among more racially tolerant Whites—a possibility ignored by conventional applications of the threat hypothesis. Taken together, my findings reveal that welfare preferences are more polarized by racial attitudes in settings where the stigmas of welfare are most visible to Whites.

86. Martin Gilens, "Racial Attitudes and Opposition to Welfare," *Journal of Politics* 57, no. 4 (1995): 994–1014; Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Anti-Poverty Policy*.

87. Soss and Schram, "A Public Transformed? Welfare Reform as Policy Feedback."

I offer evidence for these claims using geocoded data from the GSS following the 1996 welfare reforms. Additional support for my findings comes from a replication of the analysis using contemporaneous data from the ANES.

Chapter 2 lays a foundation for my analysis of racialized welfare preferences—as well as my analysis of other racialized preferences later in the thesis—by introducing the setting of America's segregated and unequal urban landscape. I then introduce the debate over welfare policy reform as it escalated into a political spectacle, before discussing the theory informing my expectation that racial and economic geography will affect the relevance of racial attitudes to White opinions on welfare. Chapter 3 presents my methods and models; tests the robustness of the analysis against potential threats to inference; and discusses the implications of this research for scholarship on racialized policy preferences and racial politics more generally.

[W]hite society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.

- Kerner Commission Report to President Lyndon Johnson (1968)

2

Local Geography and the Symbolic Politics of Welfare

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For most Americans, the term "welfare" probably brings certain images to mind. Even though decades have passed since the peak of welfare's national salience (and unpopularity) in the late 1990s, it remains a quintessential example of a racialized policy area. Anti-poverty programs such as cash transfers and food assistance have taken on racial meaning thanks to their stubborn associations with Black beneficiaries.

These associations are not, however, random occurrences. Welfare policy and its racialization therefore also offer a quintessential case in which to identify Whites' agency—in constructing a segregated and unequal America; participating in the stigmatization of welfare recipients as undeserving, poor Blacks; and, in my analysis, subjectively perceiving welfare as a greater threat to White interests in high-density Black or high-poverty settings.

This chapter proceeds in two parts. I begin in Section 2.1 by introducing the American racial

landscape as shaped by the severe residential segregation of Blacks. I show how the inequality resulting from and sustained by racial segregation offered the backdrop against which welfare came to be associated with the Black, urban poor in media and political debates beginning in the 1960s. The history of segregation, poverty, and the racialization of welfare in the United States introduces the viewpoint from which Whites would perceive welfare as a threat to their racial group's interests.

I then outline in Section 2.2 the theory supporting my identification of the amplified effect of racial prejudice on Whites' welfare spending preferences in certain settings. I posit context as a source of information that can raise the salience of either race or poverty. I hypothesize that the relationship between Whites' racial attitudes and welfare preferences will be stronger where the visual stigmas of welfare are more salient—whether due to the presence of a larger Black population or higher poverty rates, or due to the effect of racial or income segregation in making such populations more visible to Whites.

2.1 Segregation, Poverty, and the Racialization of Welfare

At the start of this century, the Texan town where I grew up might have been paraded as a model integrated community. A quiet Dallas suburb, DeSoto had a population of 50,000 that was split almost evenly between Black and White residents as of the 2000 census. What this statistic conceals, however, is how many White families were already on their way out: by 2010, the Black population of DeSoto had risen to almost 70%, and the White population had fallen to less than 23%.

The White flight experienced by DeSoto and other suburbs is only one of the interlocking forces contributing to the persistence of racial segregation in the United States. And far beyond the changing demographics of my hometown, the geographic isolation that millions of Black Americans experience is hard to imagine for those without firsthand knowledge. That is part of what makes segregation pernicious: it creates islands beyond the imagination of other area residents. These enclaves are easily ignored in the distribution of resources and opportunities, though excessively attended to as sites of stigma (and social control).

Black Americans have experienced higher levels of residential segregation than any other group in American history.[1] By creating the conditions for the emergence of the Black urban underclass, the spatial segmentation of Blacks played a central role in setting the scene for the reappearance of poverty on the national agenda, the realignment of politics around race, and the problematization of a "culture of poverty" in the 1960s. In this section, I overview the ways in which race has divided American neighborhoods and politics, creating the material realities of poverty in Black communities and the racialized imagery by which Whites judge the deservingness of welfare recipients. By emphasizing the disjuncture between the institutionalized segregation that has constrained Blacks' life chances and the rhetoric of individual agency that has blamed Blacks for their own poverty, this narrative motivates an inquiry into Whites' welfare preferences that centers Whites' own agency in the construction of welfare recipients as lesser than "normal" hardworking Americans.

2.1.1 The durability of Black segregation

Neighborhoods have durable properties, Robert Sampson argues.[2] Rather than assuming that negative social outcomes in certain areas merely reflect the individuals who choose to live there, Sampson and others in the neighborhood effects school emphasize that locations also shape outcomes. In the case of Blacks, who over the course of the 20th century were systematically relegated to neighborhoods with inferior schools, low-quality housing, and a deficit of other resources, understanding the "spatial logic" of the neighborhood is central to understanding Blacks' lagging social indicators in education, employment, and even life expectancy. More than 90% of majority Black neighborhoods were still economically disadvantaged as of 2000[3]—and 1/3 of the Black-White social mobility gap can be explained by neighborhood poverty.[4]

1. Even at the height of European immigration, the isolation of no ethnic group approximated the isolation that Blacks still experience today. See Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*.

2. Robert. J. Sampson, *Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 552.

3. A composite measure of disadvantage accounts for welfare receipt, poverty and unemployment rates, the share of female-headed households, and the share of residents under 18 in a given census tract. Sharkey, "Spatial Segmentation and the Black Middle Class."

4. Patrick Sharkey, *Neighborhoods and the Black-White Mobility Gap*, technical report (Economic Mobility Project: An Initiative of The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2009), http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/economic_mobility/PEWSHARKEYv12pdf.pdf.

To be sure, we have made major strides toward integration since the 1960s. America's 21st-century landscape is no longer neatly divided between "chocolate city" and "vanilla suburbs."[5] Besides changes in central cities (due in part to the country's increasingly complex racial makeup, but also due to the return of Whites to urban centers), contemporary suburbs are deeply heterogeneous, varying hugely in economic composition, population size, and more.[6] All-White neighborhoods have also virtually disappeared: while one-fifth of urban neighborhoods housed no Black residents in the 1960s, this is true for only one in 200 neighborhoods today.[7] At least 20% of this decline can be attributed to the emptying out of Black, urban ghettos.[8] As John Iceland et al. put it, declines in Black segregation from 1980 to 2000 have been "steady, even if modest."[9]

Stalled progress toward integration

Despite these signs of progress toward integration, Blacks remain the most segregated of any American minority. As of 2000, Blacks were segregated enough in 29 metropolitan areas to qualify as "hypersegregated," meaning highly segregated according to all of the commonly used indices.[10] In 2010, one-third of all Black metropolitan residents still lived in a hypersegregated setting.[11] At the current pace of change, Jacob Rugh and Douglas Massey predict that it will take another six decades for Black-White segregation to be considered low, or under a score of 30 on

5. Reynolds Farley et al., "'Chocolate City, Vanilla Suburbs:' Will the Trend Toward Racially Separate Communities Continue?," *Social Science Research* 7, no. 4 (1978): 319–344.

6. Eric Oliver, "Suburban Politics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Urban Politics*, ed. Peter John, Karen Mossberger, and Susan E. Clarke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–13. Further work on the changing nature of American cities and suburbs considers the racial and economic consequences of Whites' return to cities, and Blacks' (as well as recent immigrants') increasing residence in suburbs. While there are examples of affluent non-White suburbs, racially diverse suburban settings have also been sites of the increase in suburban poverty in recent years—presenting considerable challenges for suburban governments that by design were not created to provide strong safety nets. See Rucker C. Johnson, "In Search of Integration : Beyond Black," *NYU Furman Center Blog*, 2014, and Alan Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion and the Future of the American City* (New York: Knopf, 2012).

7. Edward Glaeser and Jacob Vigdor, "The End of the Segregated Century: Racial Separation in America's Neighborhoods, 1890–2010." (2012); see also John R. Logan, *Separate and Unequal: The Neighborhood Gap for Blacks, Hispanics and Asians in Metropolitan America*, technical report (Brown University, 2011), 1–22.

8. Glaeser and Vigdor, "The End of the Segregated Century: Racial Separation in America's Neighborhoods, 1890–2010.," 9.

9. John Iceland, Daniel H. Weinberg, and Erika Steinmetz, *Racial and Ethnic Residential Segregation in the United States: 1980-2000*, technical report (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002).

10. Rima Wilkes and John Iceland, "Hypersegregation in the Twenty-First Century," *Demography* 41, no. 1 (2004): 23–36. For more on the five most commonly measured dimensions, see Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*. These are further discussed later in this chapter.

11. Douglas S. Massey and Jonathan Tannen, "A Research Note on Trends in Black Hypersegregation," *Demography*, no. 2000 (2015).

Table 2.1: Black-White Dissimilarity by Selected Characteristics of Metropolitan Area, 1980-2000

	1980	1990	2000
Region			
Northeast	77.9	76.6	73.9
Midwest	82.2	78.8	74.1
South	66.0	60.5	58.1
West	71.4	62.5	55.9
Percent Black (Quartiles)			
Under 6.2%	63.8	57.0	53.1
6.2-10.5%	71.5	66.1	61.3
10.5%-19.1%	75.4	69.3	69.3
Over 19.1%	72.9	69.6	69.6
Population Size			
1 Million or more	78.0	73.2	69.4
500,000-999,999	68.5	63.2	59.7
Under 500,000	60.4	55.9	53.0

Source: US Census Summary File 1, 1980-2000, as tabulated by Iceland et al. Higher values on the dissimilarity index indicate higher degrees of segregation, substantively interpreted as the proportion of Blacks who would have to change neighborhoods for each neighborhood to reflect the makeup of the city as a whole.

the commonly used dissimilarity index of segregation.[12] While segregation has historically been highest in the Northeast and Midwest (with extreme dissimilarity scores being those above 75), Table 2.1 shows that even scores for the South and West are well above the upper boundary of the low range. Moreover, recent research has challenged the conventional wisdom that the South has historically been less segregated: Trevon Logan and John Parman's new measure of segregation based on next-door neighbors indicates that, in the first half of the 20th century, Blacks and Whites may have been more likely to share neighborhoods in the South, but less likely to be neighbors.[13]

The persistence of Black segregation has at times been attributed to the preferences of Blacks themselves. Scholars such as William Clark and Orlando Patterson, for example, argue that Blacks should be more willing to live in Whiter neighborhoods.[14] Considerable research, however, has found Whites' aversion to living in racially mixed neighborhoods to be significantly more

12. Jacob S. Rugh and Douglas S. Massey, "Segregation in Post-Civil Rights America," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 11, no. 2 (2014): 205–232.

13. Trevon D. Logan and John M. Parman, "The National Rise in Residential Segregation," *Journal of Economic History* 77, no. 1 (2017): 127–170.

14. W.A.V. Clark, "Residential Preferences and Neighborhood Racial Segregation: A Test of the Schelling Segregation Model," *Demography* 28, no. 1 (1991): 1–19; Orlando Patterson, *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's Racial Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Civitas/Counterpoint, 1997).

prominent than unwillingness on the part of Blacks,[15] challenging the claim that Blacks self-segregate due to homophily.[16] Camille Zubrinsky and Lawrence Bobo state the issue bluntly: "Blacks are at once the most open to integration and yet most often seen as the least desirable neighbors."[17] These findings have been bolstered by evidence that Hispanics and Asian Americans mirror Whites' aversion to living with Blacks in several major cities, further motivating an inquiry into the experience of Blacks in particular.[18]

One effect of Whites' aversion to Black neighbors has been demonstrated by Allison Shertzer and Randall Waltz, whose analysis of early 20th-century census data reveals that Whites' rates of departure from neighborhoods across ten major cities were discontinuous in every city when a neighborhood reached a 10-15% Black population share.[19] Such evidence of White flight supports Thomas Schelling's dynamic model of segregation, holding that even small preferences for same-race neighbors can lead to large-scale segregation.[20] Findings of White flight further support the central argument of Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton's seminal *American Apartheid*, that the "extreme racial isolation [of Blacks] did not just happen."[21] Rather, Whites consciously avoided living with Blacks, contributing to the creation of dense Black neighborhoods where deleterious social outcomes were compounded.

To avoid Blacks, however, Whites needed somewhere to go. Accordingly, Massey and Denton emphasize that institutional factors made it possible for Whites to fulfill their preferences for White neighborhoods. Not least among these factors was the influence of federal, state, and

15. See, for example, Lincoln Quillian, "Why Is Black-White Residential Segregation So Persistent? Evidence on Three Theories from Migration Data," *Social Science Research* 31, no. 2 (2002): 197–229. The work of Maria Krysan has also provided good insight on this topic, highlighting Blacks' tendency to prefer neighborhoods that are 50-50 Black/White—a percentage of Blacks much higher than the typical ceiling of White's neighborhood preferences at about 20% Black. See Maria Krysan and Reynolds Farley, "The Residential Preferences of Blacks: Do They Explain Persistent Segregation?," *Social Forces* 80, no. 3 (2002): 937–980.

16. Sean-Shong Hwang and Steve H. Murdock, "Racial Attraction or Racial Avoidance in American Suburbs?," *Social Forces* 77, no. 2 (1998): 541–565.

17. Camille L. Zubrinsky and Lawrence D. Bobo, "Prismatic Metropolis: Race and Residential Segregation in the City of the Angels," *Social Science Research* 25, no. 4 (1996): 367. See also Camille Zubrinksy Charles, *Won't You Be My Neighbor: Race, Class, and Residence in Los Angeles* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

18. Ronald J.O. Flores and Arun Peter Lobo, "The Reassertion of a Black/Non-Black Color Line: The Rise in Integrated Neighborhoods Without Blacks in New York City, 1970-2010," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 35, no. 3 (2013): 255–282; Michael D. M. Bader and Siri Warkentien, "The Fragmented Evolution of Racial Integration since the Civil Rights Movement," *Sociological Science*, no. 3 (2016): 135–166.

19. Allison Shertzer and Randall P. Walsh, *Racial Sorting and the Emergence of Segregation in American Cities*, technical report 22077 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2016), http://www.nber.org/papers/w22077.

20. Thomas C. Schelling, "Dynamic Models of Segregation," *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 1 (1971): 143–186.

21. Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 2.

local governments, all of which supported the segregation of Blacks through official means for most of the 20th century.[22]

Institutional support for segregation

As late as 1900 the average Black family still lived in a majority-White neighborhood,[23] but the waves of Blacks who left the South in the Great Migration brought about a major shift in the racial makeup of the Northern and Midwestern cities where Blacks began to concentrate.[24] This was the era in which the institutional foundations for segregation were set in place, particularly thanks to the actions of the federal government. The 1934 creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) brought the advent of redlining, or the practice of rating Black neighborhoods unsuitable for FHA-insured mortgages. Black veterans were later systematically excluded from the support for home ownership provided by Title III of the 1944 G.I. Bill.[25] Racially restrictive covenants excluding Blacks from certain neighborhoods were not outlawed until the 1948 case *Shelley v. Kraemer*.[26] The interstate highway program facilitated suburbanization by subsidizing the cost of driving from distant locations into central cities from the 1950s onward, while at the same time offering little support for public transportation within cities themselves.[27]

In 1968, the Fair Housing Act and the Housing and Urban Development Act sought to ban residential discrimination and create new integrated public housing, but both fell short of their

22. See Richard Rothstein's recent history of racial segregation as a deliberate product of government policies, from the local to the federal level. Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, 2017). For more on the role of the federal government in particular, see Desmond S. King, *Separate and Unequal: Black Americans and the US Federal Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

23. Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 10.

24. David M. Cutler, Edward L. Glaeser, and Jacob L. Vigdor, "The Rise and Decline of the American Ghetto," *Journal of Political Economy* 107, no. 3 (1999): 455.

25. Kathleen Frydl, *The GI Bill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) Suzanne Mettler and Eric Welch have also argued that the G.I. Bill created "citizens" out of the White veterans it targeted through investment in their education, which resulted in higher levels of political participation among the policy's beneficiaries; this positive policy feedback represents yet another benefit from which Blacks were excluded. See Suzanne Mettler and Joe Soss, "The Consequences of Public Policy for Democratic Citizenship: Bridging Policy Studies and Mass Politics," *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 1 (2004): 55–73.

26. Richard R. W. Brooks and Carol M. Rose, *Saving the Neighborhood: Racially Restrictive Covenants, Law, and Social Norms* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

27. Paul Kantor, "The Two Faces of American Urban Policy," *Urban Affairs Review* 43 (2013): 821–850 For an example of how highway development shaped a city's landscape, see also Clarence N. Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989).

promises as the state systematically sided with the interests of suburban Whites.[28] The housing legislation did help some families break away from poor Black communities, which the Black middle class had long sought to do.[29] Yet, as William Julius Wilson has prominently argued, this "outmigration" of more affluent Blacks from central cities was key in producing concentrated Black poverty: the deindustrialization of the 1970s most heavily affected the poor, unskilled Black laborers who remained behind.[30]

Although there has been debate over whether racial segregation itself produced the concentration of poverty among Blacks, dense pockets of disadvantage increasingly appeared in segregated Black communities from 1970 to 1990.[31] Some scholars identify these neighborhoods as census tracts where more than 40% of residents live below the poverty line.[32] Other researchers look for high levels of unemployment, welfare receipt, female-headed families, and high densities of children as signs of concentrated disadvantage.[33] Either way, the durable properties of these neighborhoods are ones that compound the effects of deprivation, such as poor school performance, drug use, and violent crime.[34] And because outmigration never resulted in the full separation of middle-class Blacks from poorer communities, the neighborhoods of Black households making between $55,000 to $100,000 annually are comparable (on measures of neighborhood economic disadvantage) to the neighborhoods of White households making $12,000 to $30,000 annually.[35]

28. The clash between housing secretary George Romney and President Nixon, who sided with his White suburban-dwelling voter base, is an example of the weak enforcement of the 1968 housing legislation. See Christopher Bonastia, *Knocking on the Door: The Federal Government's Attempt to Desegregate the Suburbs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

29. Mary Pattillo, "Black Middle-Class Neighborhoods," *Annual Review of Sociology* 31, no. 1 (August 2005): 305–329.

30. William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

31. Paul Jargowsky argues that segregation by income increased among all groups in the 1970s and 1980s, and while increases were particularly sharp for Black Americans, Jargowsky finds no interactive effect of racial segregation in his model. Massey and Denton, on the other hand, argue that segregation is key to explaining the severity of the impact of deindustrialization on Blacks. Lincoln Quillian has perhaps most successfully synthesized the debate by arguing that three dimensions of segregation create concentrated poverty among Blacks: racial segregation, segregation by income among Blacks, and segregation of Blacks from non-poor members of other racial groups. See Paul A. Jargowsky, "Take the Money and Run: Economic Segregation in U.S. Metropolitan Areas," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 6 (1996): 984–998 See also Lincoln Quillian, "Segregation and Poverty Concentration: The Role of Three Segregations.," *American Sociological Review* 77, no. 3 (June 2012): 354–379.

32. Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk, *America Unequal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

33. Sharkey, "Spatial Segmentation and the Black Middle Class."

34. Edward G. Goetz, "The Politics of Poverty Deconcentration and Housing Demolition," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 22, no. 2 (2000): 157–173.

35. Sharkey, "Spatial Segmentation and the Black Middle Class," 927; See also Sean F. Reardon, Lindsay Fox, and Joseph Townsend, "Neighborhood Income Composition by Household Race and Income, 1990–2009," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 660, no. 1 (July 2015): 78–97.

In conjunction with the literature discussed above, this fact should demonstrate that Blacks have a residential experience wholly distinct from Whites.

In sum, segregation has created what Gunnar Myrdal called an "artificial city:"[36] a world in which White Americans in 2013 had social networks that were 91% White and only 1% Black,[37] and where White American families in 2016 had an average wealth of $933,700 compared to Black families' average of $138,200.[38] The story of segregation is therefore integral to understanding the vantage point from which many Whites would respond to questions about welfare spending: likely in a position vitally different from that of most Blacks, and not cognizant of what Massey and Denton call the "fundamental fact" that segregation "constrains Black life chances irrespective of personal traits, individual motivations, or private achievements."[39] A denial of this fact fueled much of the debate over urban poverty and welfare spending that began in the 1960s and continued throughout the late 20th century.

2.1.2 Race and the politics of welfare reform

Among other things, the 1960s brought what Michael Katz calls the "rediscovery" of poverty, American intellectuals and politicians having seemingly forgotten about it while the poverty rate dropped from its Great Depression peak of 48% to around 20% by the 1960s.[40] The postwar boom had brought unprecedented growth to the United States, while the New Deal had also provided new forms of support to Americans, ranging from the introduction of social insurance in the form of Social Security to the creation of welfare in its original form of cash transfers to poor families: Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). In 1936, only 14% of AFDC beneficiaries were Black. But, by the time the nation turned its attention back to poverty in the 1960s, over 40% of AFDC recipients were Black.[41] This increase partially reflects early exclusionary maneuvers by

36. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 618.

37. Robert P. Jones, Daniel Cox, and Juhem Navarro-Rivera, *2013 American Values Survey: In Search of Libertarians in America*, technical report (Public Religion Research Institute, 2013), https://www.prri.org/research/2013-american-values-survey/.

38. Average figures are drawn from the 2016 Survey of Consumer Finances data on wealth-holding by race. Data available from the Federal Reserve at https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/scfindex.htm.

39. Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 2.

40. Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor* (New York: Pantheon New York, 1989).

41. Bobbie Green Turner, *Federal/State Aid to Dependent Children Program and Its Benefits to Black Children in America, 1935-1985* (Garland Pub., 1993).

states to deny benefits to the Black poor, which faded as the federal government increased matching funds for the program.[42] Yet it also reflects greater poverty resulting from the exclusion of Blacks from home ownership; a similar denial of social insurance for Blacks through the exclusion of farm and domestic labor from the Social Security Act; and the deleterious effects of segregation in constraining Blacks' outcomes. Whatever the causes, when Americans rediscovered poverty in the 1960s, a disproportionate number of those receiving cash assistance also happened to be Black.

The media, the Moynihan Report, and the "culture of poverty"

Though a trip to Appalachia by President Kennedy had brought visibility to the rural White poor, the growing Civil Rights movement served as the larger backdrop for poverty's reemergence on the national agenda under Lyndon Johnson.[43] Particularly in light of civil unrest by Blacks in cities across the country in the summers of 1964-1967 and a new focus by Civil Rights leaders on economic empowerment, the conditions of the Black poor in segregated urban areas became the new face of poverty. In an analysis of national news magazines, Martin Gilens finds that Blacks featured in only 27% of images of the poor in 1964, but this percentage increased drastically to 49% in 1965, 53% in 1966, and 72% in 1967—ultimately projecting an image that was double the true proportion of welfare recipients who were Black.[44]

This shift in media coverage was paralleled by a new focus on Black poverty in political and intellectual discourse. The 1960s produced a powerful rhetoric of poverty as pathology, as the Blacks who lived in areas of concentrated poverty came to be known as the urban underclass. One harbinger of this rhetorical shift was the now-infamous 1965 Moynihan Report, written by sociologist Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Moynhian argued that intractable Black poverty was the most pressing issue beyond Blacks' achievement of basic civil rights. As a junior employee of the Department of Labor, Moynihan particularly emphasized the problem of endemic unemployment among Black males. However, what he identified as the "fundamental source" of the economic

42. Ibid. Another informative resource that situates the exclusion of Blacks alongside the exclusion of other non-Whites and non-citizens, particularly Mexican immigrants, is Cybelle Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State from the Progressive Era to the New Deal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

43. Edward D. Berkowitz, *America's Welfare State: From Roosevelt to Reagan* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

44. Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Anti-Poverty Policy*, 109-114.

gap between Whites and Blacks was that the family structure of lower-income Blacks was "highly unstable, and in many urban centers [was] approaching complete breakdown."[45]

A number of scholars suggest that Moynihan was well intentioned, seeking to advance racial progress in the United States. The issues the report discussed—high rates of divorce, children born to unwed mothers, and single-parent households—had long been a subject of concern among Blacks. Also predating Moynihan's report were the gender norms he invoked. Ange-Marie Hancock points out that civil rights leaders at the time were making similar arguments that Black men should assume their proper places as the heads of Black families—thus contributing to the stigmatization of single, poor Black women.[46] Douglas Massey and Robert Sampson further argue that Moynihan's incendiary and moralistic take on the condition of the Black poor was ostensibly an attempt to provoke the Johnson Administration to take action.[47] Indeed, Moynihan concludes the report by saying that his goal was to convince readers that "three centuries of injustice have brought about deep-seated structural distortions in the life of the Negro American."[48]

Whatever Moynihan's intention, his structural critique was entirely lost when sections of the report were leaked to the press, causing sensationalistic debate in political and intellectual circles. In particular, Moynihan's declaration that weak family structure was at the center of the "tangle of pathology" that ensnared Blacks dovetailed perfectly with another key contribution to the new rhetoric of the underclass: Oscar Lewis's concept of the "culture of poverty."[49] Lewis cited structural economic conditions as the reason that poverty in certain areas would produce self-perpetuating values and practices. But the structural dimension of his argument was lost, much like Moynihan's, as the concept of the culture of poverty was adopted into political discourse and media coverage, and used to explain the problems of poverty in individualistic terms.

The backlash against Moynihan produced a chilling effect among liberal theorists. Critical of the report as an attempt to blame Blacks for their own disadvantage, for decades liberals stayed far away from Black family life or any other topics verging on "blaming the victim" (a term coined

45. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*, technical report (United States Department of Labor, 1965), 5.

46. Ange-Marie Hancock, "Contemporary Welfare Reform and the Public Identity of the "Welfare Queen"," *Race, Gender & Class* 10 (2003): 1–22; See also Paula J. Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: Bantam, 1996).

47. Douglas S. Massey and Robert. J. Sampson, "Moynihan Redux: Legacies and Lessons," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 621, no. 1 (2009): 6–27.

48. Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action*, 47.

49. Oscar Lewis, *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty - San Juan and New York*, vol. 13 (New York: Random House New York, 1966).

by journalist William Ryan in describing the Moynihan Report).[50] Though liberal scholars such as Douglas Glasgow emphasized the role of institutional racism in sustaining the Black middle class,[51] it was not until the 1987 publication of William Julius Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged* that the liberal academy slowly ventured back into questions of culture,[52] though it remained reluctant to even acknowledge behavioral patterns in Black communities to a degree that Massey and Sampson have called "scandalous."[53] Amidst silence from liberals, concepts like the tangle of pathology and culture of poverty became central to the problematization of the urban underclass by conservative theorists, who located the causes of poverty in the poor themselves.[54]

This rhetoric had appeal beyond the conservative establishment, melding easily with an American tendency to judge the deservingness of the poor. Hugh Heclo calls it a polarity in the national psyche that simultaneously values both self-sufficiency and mutual dependence: while Social Security nicely straddles these two ideals, built on mutual dependence but offering the illusion of "paying oneself," cash assistance is less comfortably embraced—particularly if welfare is seen to benefit "someone else."[55] As a result, argues Michael Katz, the "vocabulary of poverty" slips "easily, unreflectively, into a language of family, race, and culture" rather than focusing on the structural factors which produce economic inequality.[56] At its extreme, the inclination to find the poor undeserving takes the form of arguments from Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead, both of whom cite welfare itself as the *cause* of sustained poverty, offering perverse incentives to recipients and failing to require anything of the poor in return.[57] In its milder form, the culture of poverty was a powerful euphemism among the White public for Blacks who behaved in ways unworthy of government support. In public opinion surveys, racial attitudes and welfare policy preferences,

50. Massey and Sampson, "Moynihan Redux: Legacies and Lessons." For more on the effect of the Moynihan report on public discourse on Black poverty, see James T. Patterson, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Moynihan Report and America's Struggle over Black Family Life—From LBJ to Obama* (Basic Books, 2010).

51. Douglas G. Glasgow, *The Black Underclass: Poverty, Unemployment, and Entrapment of Ghetto Youth* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1980).

52. Mario Luis Small and David J Harding, "Reconsidering Culture and Poverty," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. May (2010): 6–27.

53. Massey and Sampson, "Moynihan Redux: Legacies and Lessons," 13.

54. Note that authors further to the left, such as Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, were more outspoken against these conservative explanations throughout the 1970s and 80s. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971).

55. Hugh Heclo, "General Welfare and Two Amierican Political Traditions," *Political Science* 101, no. 2 (1986): 190.

56. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor*, 7.

57. Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Lawrence M. Mead, *The New Politics of Poverty: The Nonworking Poor in America* (Basic Books, 1993).

which had previously been uncorrelated (r = 0.03), became closely associated after 1965 (r = 0.68).[58]

The road to welfare reform

The association between Blacks and welfare undergirding the culture-of-poverty debate was promoted through media coverage featuring negative images of Blacks, but it also became relevant among the public thanks to the politicization of welfare as an issue dividing the parties.[59] Lyndon Johnson's efforts to find solutions to the problems of poverty and segregation came at a time when the party system was reorienting itself around the issue of race. Edward Carmines and James Stimson document a flip in both elite behavior and party identification among the mass public after the 1964 presidential election, in which Barry Goldwater lost to Johnson but secured the first Republican majorities in the Deep South since Reconstruction with his mantra of "states' rights" in opposition to civil rights legislation.[60] In tandem with the rise of racial conservatism, or the application of conservative ideology to government policy toward Blacks, Carmines and Stimson document a steady "evolution" of the parties as segregationist Whites moved their support to the Republican Party. Though some scholars argue that matters of race are not sufficient to explain changes in the political parties since 1960,[61] the difference in racial resentment between Republicans and Democrats on the ANES widened from less than 5% to more than 15% between 1988 and 2004, suggesting that race is at least one factor that has shaped contemporary party affiliation.[62]

Whether or not racial attitudes explain partisan realignment, the racialized issue of urban poverty was an issue that divided the electorate. Ronald Reagan did not bring about the large-

58. Paul M. Kellstedt, *The Mass Media and the Dynamics of American Racial Attitudes* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

59. A central finding of Gilens's study on the media's representations of the Black poor is not only that the Black poor were overrepresented but also that they were more likely to be depicted in negative coverage of poverty than Whites, who were portrayed in a more sympathetic light. See Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Anti-Poverty Policy*.

60. Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

61. See Byron Shafer and Richard Johnston's focus on the late industrialization of the South to argue that class rather than race is the driver of partisan change, or Nolan McCarty and others' argument that income inequality is key. Byron E. Shafer and Richard Johnston, *The End of Southern Exceptionalism: Class, Race, and Partisan Change in the Postwar South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 1–14.

62. Marc J. Hetherington, "Review Article: Putting Polarization in Perspective," *British Journal of Political Science* 39, no. February (2009): 413.

scale retrenchment of welfare programs he promised,[63] but welfare proved to be a powerful, race-coded wedge issue, among multiple social problems rooted in economic devastation that were portrayed by the New Right and mass media as individual moral failures.[64] Both parties, however, used tropes such as the "welfare queen"—shorthand for Black, single mothers with a supposedly pathological dependence on welfare.[65] Such perceptions of Black dependency were facilitated by the "submerged" nature of the contemporary American welfare state.[66] The American middle class is a major beneficiary of federal spending thanks to subsidies such as tax deductions for charitable contributions, home mortgage interest deductions, tax exclusions for employer-sponsored health insurance, and the Earned Income Tax Credit.[67] Yet, because this spending is largely administered through a complex web of tax expenditures intended to manipulate private decisions, it is easy for many Americans to think that government spending goes to help "someone else"—such as poor Black, single mothers.[68]

The potency of the welfare queen trope further exemplifies what Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider call the social construction of welfare recipients as "undeserving and incapable."[69] Assuming the poor's immorality or lack of will, the welfare system serves to "regulate the poor," as Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward argue, through the restriction and stigmatization of welfare receipt.[70] Other scholars have also demonstrated that, rather than breeding dependency among recipients, welfare programs are much more likely to impact psychological wellbeing and feelings of efficacy. As Andrea Louise Campbell argues, being subjected to scrutiny to prove eligibility for welfare both undermines peoples' sense of worth, and undercuts the policy's

63. Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher and the Politics of Retrenchment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

64. Jimmie L. Reeves and Richard Campbell, *Cracked Coverage: Television News, the Anti-Cocaine Crusade, and the Reagan Legacy* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994).

65. Ange-Marie Hancock, *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen* (New York: NYU Press, 2004); See also Franklin D. Gilliam Jr., "The "Welfare Queen" Experiment: How Viewers React to Images of African-American Mothers on Welfare," *Nieman Reports* 53, no. 2 (1999): 49–52.

66. Suzanne Mettler, "Reconstituting the Submerged State: The Challenges of Social Policy Reform in the Obama Era," *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 3 (2010): 803–824.

67. Ibid.

68. Sven Steinmo, *The Evolution of Modern States: Sweden, Japan, and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 153.

69. Anne L. Schneider and Helen M. Ingram, *Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005).

70. Fox Piven and Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*.

ostensible goals of improving the wellbeing of the poor.[71]

Entering the 1990s, the Democratic Party was struggling to fight its image as soft on underclass issues amidst a continued loss of support from the traditionally Democratic White working class.[72] Welfare had only grown more salient in the meantime: as of 1994, one poll found that most Americans believed that AFDC was one of the two biggest items in the national budget, though it never exceeded 5% of the cost of Social Security.[73] Bill Clinton's pledge to "end welfare as we know it" may have been a campaign tactic rather than a policy priority,[74] but his message was both bipartisan and powerful, supported by progressive revisionists who saw the opportunity to generate a new politics of welfare and by Republicans who avidly took up the issue in Congress.[75] The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) replaced AFDC with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which eliminated cash assistance in favor of work requirements and time-limited welfare support.[76]

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, welfare had become considerably less salient by 2000. But after an intense spike in media coverage of the 1996 welfare reforms,[77] along with the mobilization of public anxieties related to race, it is unsurprising that underlying images of the poor as idle and immoral were persistent following the reforms.[78] A 2001 poll on what Americans considered to be the major causes of poverty further found that 57% of Americans cited a decline in moral values, 52% cited lack of motivation, and 46% cited the welfare system itself.[79] The Democratic Party had hoped the reform would produce a positive policy feedback effect by reducing the association between poverty, lack of effort, and Black beneficiaries—but liberal reformers failed

71. Andrea Louise Campbell, "Universalism, Targeting, and Participation," in *Remaking America: Democracy and Public Policy in an Age of Inequality* (2007), 121–140; see also Joe Soss, "Making Clients and Citizens: Welfare Policy as a Source of Status, Belief, and Action," in *Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy* (SUNY Press, 2005).

72. Ruy A. Teixeira and Joel Rogers, *America's Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters* (Basic Books, 2001).

73. Jacob S. Hacker, "Privatizing Risk Without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 02 (2004): 243–260.

74. R. Kent Weaver, "Polls, Priming, and the Politics of Welfare Reform," *Navigating Public Opinion*, 2002, 106–123.

75. Joe Soss, Richard C. Fording, and Sanford Schram, *Disciplining the Poor: Neoliberal Paternalism and the Persistent Power of Race* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

76. TANF departed from AFDC by shifting from unlimited federal matching funds for welfare provision to offering each state a block grant and giving states more flexibility in designing their programs. It further imposed a five-year lifetime limit on the receipt of assistance and increased work requirements for beneficiaries.

77. Schneider and Ingram, *Deserving and Entitled: Social Constructions and Public Policy*.

78. Soss and Schram, "A Public Transformed? Welfare Reform as Policy Feedback," 122.

79. National Public Radio, Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard Kennedy School, *Poverty in America*, 2001, http://kff.org/medicaid/poll-finding/national-survey-on-poverty-in-america/.

Figure 2.1: Declining Salience of Welfare After 1996



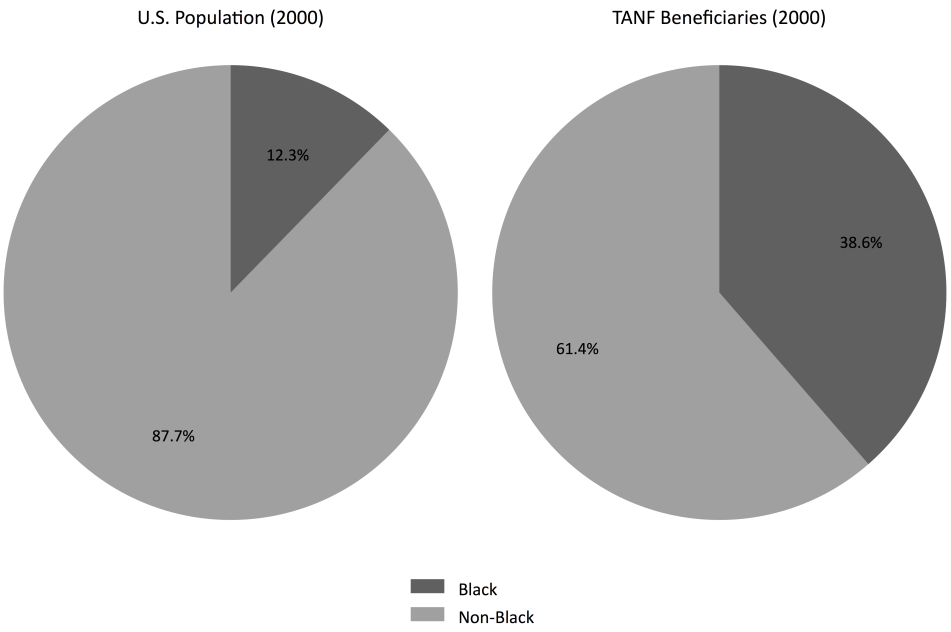
Source: American National Election Study Cumulative File, 1948-2008. Figure illustrates spike in issue salience of welfare in the lead up to the 1996 reforms, with the percentage of respondents citing it as the "most important problem facing the country" declining significantly after the reform bill was passed.

to distinguish between welfare as a powerful political symbol, and AFDC as a program with material effects for only a small proportion of the population.[80]

The 2000 GSS therefore fell at a time when the welfare debate had calmed, but attitudes toward the poor remained largely unchanged; when ghettos were widely believed to be "the product of the personal failings of the people who live in them;"[81] and when 38.6% of TANF recipients were Black (Figure 2.2).[82] This overrepresentation of Blacks among the poor, combined with an American tradition of considering the poor indolent and unworthy, substantiated the image of Black poverty that Part I of this thesis examines. It was in opposition to that image that Whites came to the defense of their group interests in the 1990s welfare debate—making impassioned calls for reform of a policy that never affected more than 6% of the population.[83]

80. Soss and Schram, "A Public Transformed? Welfare Reform as Policy Feedback," 122.
81. Goetz, "The Politics of Poverty Deconcentration and Housing Demolition," 161.
82. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Characteristics and Financial Circumstances of TANF Recipients, Fiscal Year 2010,* 2012.
83. Jacob S. Hacker, *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Figure 2.2: Racial Makeup of Welfare Beneficiaries in 2000



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Figure illustrates overrepresentation of Blacks among the TANF beneficiary pool as of 2000.

2.2 Racialized Preferences in Context

Having traced how poverty in general and welfare in particular became associated with Blacks, I now draw on this history to inform the central argument of Part I: that Whites' welfare preferences are more likely to be racialized—or predicted by Whites' racial attitudes—in geographic settings where the visibility of race or poverty raises the salience of welfare's image as a benefit to Blacks at the cost of Whites.

In Section 2.2.1, I discuss why welfare's reputation as a benefit to the Black urban poor calls for an approach theorizing Whites' awareness of either racial diversity or poverty in their local surroundings. I detail the current lack of synthesis between individual- and group-level theories of White policy preferences. I then explain why the synthesis I offer emphasizes Whites' agency in holding prejudicial attitudes and perceiving threats, including the subjectivity of what Whites perceive depending on levels of segregation in their local surroundings.

In Section 2.2.2, I present a model in which racialized welfare preferences vary according to Whites' racial attitudes *and* the contexts in which those Whites live. I offer a novel application of the racial threat hypothesis—conceptualizing both prejudice and place as multidimensional—to

argue that the racial geography of an area amplifies the effect of traditional racial stereotypes on welfare preferences, whereas economic geography amplifies the effect of racially resentful attitudes. I argue that Whites' racial attitudes are more predictive of their welfare preferences not simply where the stigmas of welfare are salient due to a large Black population or high poverty rate, but more specifically where residential segregation makes Black or poor households more visible from the viewpoint of Whites.

2.2.1 Synthesizing individual- and group-level theories of prejudice

The history discussed in Section 2.1 is important to the present study for two reasons. First, it introduces the visual stigmas that featured in the racialization of welfare, as well as the durable conditions of segregation and inequality that sustained them. Images of poor Blacks, and the blighted neighborhoods they inhabited, were central to welfare's construal as a threat to "hard-working" (and implicitly White) Americans. This reputation not only leads many Americans to drastically overestimate the scale of welfare spending and proportion of beneficiaries who are Black, but it also frames welfare as an instance of racial group competition.[84] This framing helps explain why even Whites with little personal interest in the matter might nonetheless oppose welfare spending in defense of Whites' collective interests.[85]

Second, welfare was politicized in relation to *place* as well as race, informing my expectation that Whites' expression of racialized welfare preferences varies across metropolitan areas. In order to test this expectation, I synthesize individual-level and contextual models of Whites' racial policy preferences—which are typically presented in isolation of one another.

For example, the seminal individual-level analysis comes from Gilens, who shows that the term "welfare" functions as a code word for means-tested transfer programs associated with Blacks—namely food stamps and cash transfers—and that opposition to such programs is strongest among Whites who believe Blacks are poor due to an inherent lack of work ethic.[86] Examples from across comparative politics support Gilens's finding: social affinity with a policy's perceived

84. Jacob S. Hacker, "After Welfare," *The New Republic* October 11 (October 2004).

85. Blumer, "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position"; Bobo, "Whites' Opposition to Busing: Symbolic Racism or Realistic Group Conflict?"

86. Gilens, "Racial Attitudes and Opposition to Welfare"; Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Anti-Poverty Policy*.

beneficiaries plays a key role, distinct from economic self-interest, in determining individuals' attitudes toward redistribution.[87] Though these approaches focus on individual attitudes alone, they are not divorced from the insights of structural, group-based theories of prejudice.[88] Generally speaking, it is on the grounds that group members share a social identity, and prefer spending that benefits their in-group, that Whites are predicted to oppose spending associated with Blacks.

What individual-level approaches ignore, however, is the possibility that Whites' racialized welfare preferences reflect not only concerns about an undeserving outgroup, but also geographically clustered beliefs about the threat welfare poses to White interests.

Updating the racial threat hypothesis

As introduced in Chapter 1, a long line of research into the racial threat hypothesis has suggested that, seeing Blacks as a source of competition for political status, social wellbeing, and economic security, Whites in proximity to a large Black population will seek to protect White privilege and power.[89] Subsequent work has identified a threat response in the form of White electoral support for anti-Black or anti-redistributive candidates[90] as well as greater expressions of hostility toward Blacks.[91] Lincoln Quillian has further illuminated the economic dimension of threat, arguing that prejudice is lessened when Whites do not feel locked in a zero-sum competition over resources—a finding supported by research extending the threat hypothesis beyond Whites' racial attitudes to their policy preferences.[92] Contexts marked by lower socio-economic status, as well as greater

87. Alesina and Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference*; Charlotte Cavaillé and Kris-Stella Trump, "The Two Facets of Social Policy Preferences," *Journal of Politics* 77, no. 1 (2015): 146–160; Esteban F. Klor and Moses Shayo, "Social Identity and Preferences over Redistribution," *Journal of Public Economics* 94, nos. 3-4 (2010): 269–278.

88. By "structural, group-based theories," I refer to the tradition of Blumer's group position mode, Sidanius and coauthors' social dominance theory, and other group conflict models—as discussed in Chapter 1.

89. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*; Blalock, *Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations*.

90. Giles and Buckner, "David Duke and Black Threat: An Old Hypothesis Revisited"; but see also Voss, "Beyond Racial Threat: Failure of an Old Hypothesis in the New South"; Hersh and Nall, "The Primacy of Race in the Geography of Income-Based Voting: New Evidence from Public Voting Records."

91. Fossett and Kiecolt, "The Relative Size of Minority Populations and White Racial Attitudes"; Giles, "Percent Black and Racial Hostility: An Old Assumption Reexamined"; Taylor, "How White Attitudes Vary with the Racial Composition of Local Populations: Numbers Count."

92. Quillian, "Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat: Population Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe"; Lincoln Quillian, "Group Threat and Regional Change in Attitudes Toward African-Americans," *American Journal of Sociology* 102, no. 3 (1996): 816.

racial diversity, have been found to exacerbate White opposition to racial policies.[93] My analysis in Part I builds on this approach by applying the logic of racial threat to Whites' welfare preferences.

What is problematic about the racial threat hypothesis, however, is its reinforcement of the assumption that Blacks are inherently threatening, rather than *perceived* as such from Whites' subjective viewpoint. As a result, existing scholarship endorses the assumed neutrality of Whites' perspective and gives Whites little responsibility in construing a threat.[94] Therefore, while I follow the convention of operationalizing threat with a measure of Black population share, I argue that threat is not a consequence of Blacks' presence, but of Whites' perceptions. This understanding underpins my analysis, which recognizes not only that individual-level prejudices are likely to affect how Whites view their local geography, but also that welfare policy is likely to be viewed through a racial lens.

I thus diverge from Eric Oliver and Tali Mendelberg, who find that context predicts policy preferences only within the geography in which a policy's benefits are distributed.[95] These authors do not examine welfare preferences, but their argument comports with evidence that welfare provision is less generous in more diverse states, given that welfare is administered at the state level.[96] However, to assume that Whites are thinking specifically of their state's Black population when asked about welfare would ignore that welfare was politicized as an urban issue, and that political behavior often reflects local (i.e. sub-state) concerns.[97] I therefore analyze White welfare preferences as they vary across metropolitan areas—specifically, according to the salience of race and poverty in these local contexts.

93. Oliver and Mendelberg, "Reconsidering the Environmental Determinants of White Racial Attitudes"; Branton and Jones, "Reexamining Racial Attitudes: The Conditional Relationship between Diversity and Socioeconomic Environment."

94. On the invisibility of their own racial identity to many Whites, and the related assumption that their vision is neutral, see Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*; see also my discussion of standpoint theory in Part III.

95. Oliver and Mendelberg, "Reconsidering the Environmental Determinants of White Racial Attitudes."

96. A long line of studies have documented less generous welfare provision in more diverse states. See Gerald C. Wright, "Racism and Welfare Policy in America," *Social Science Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (1977): 718–730; Larry L Orr, "Income Transfers as a Public Good: An Application to AFDC," *American Economic Review* 66, no. 3 (1976): 359–371; Robert D. Brown, "Party Cleavages and Welfare Effort in the American States," *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 1 (1995): 23–33; Robert D. Plotnick and Richard F. Winters, "A Politico-Economic Theory of Income Redistribution," *American Political Science Review* 79, no. 2 (1985): 458–473.

Rodney Hero and Caroline Tolbert have considered additional features of a state's ethnic distribution, such as the heterogeneity or homogeneity of a majority or minority population, and found the lowest welfare support in states with homogeneous White majorities. See Rodney E. Hero and Caroline J. Tolbert, "A Racial/Ethnic Diversity Interpretation of Politics and Policy in the States of the US," *American Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 3 (1996): 851–871.

97. Waldo R. Tobler, "A Computer Movie Simulating Urban Growth in the Detroit Region," *Economic Geography* 46 (1970): 234–240; Andrew Reeves and James G. Gimpel, "Ecologies of Unease: Geographic Context and National Economic Evaluations," *Political Behavior* 34, no. 3 (2012): 507–534.

Similar reasoning informs my departure from Branton and Jones.[98] Although welfare is among the policy areas these authors analyze, they identify greater welfare opposition in settings with a high representation of multiple racial/ethnic groups. While valuable, their focus on racial heterogeneity is at odds with the extent to which welfare has been politicized in relation to Black Americans more so than other minorities. I therefore conceptualize racial diversity in Black-White terms.

Finally, I consider residential segregation, by both race and income, as a force likely to affect Whites' perceptions of their surroundings.

Segregation and the perception of a threat

The beginning of this chapter made clear that segregation has harmful consequences for isolated minorities from whom resources and opportunities are withheld. While this might bring positive outcomes for dominant group members who are simultaneously able to concentrate privilege in their own communities, high levels of segregation portend problems for communities at large, from lowering general trust and community cohesion[99] to limiting economic growth.[100] When it comes to segregation's effect on intergroup relations, authors often argue that negative outcomes result from the lack of intergroup contact in segregated spaces, with reference to Gordon Allport's work.[101] However, the benefits of small-scale, interpersonal interaction for reducing bias are not easily applicable to larger settings such as a city, even if a racially integrated one.[102] Furthermore, segregation's implications for an *experiential* outcome, such as interpersonal contact, seem to be

98. Branton and Jones, "Reexamining Racial Attitudes: The Conditional Relationship between Diversity and Socioeconomic Environment."

99. Jonathan T. Rothwell, "The Effects of Racial Segregation on Trust and Volunteering in US Cities," *Urban Studies* 49, no. 10 (December 2011): 2109–2136; Eric M. Uslaner, *Segregation and Mistrust: Diversity, Isolation, and Social Cohesion* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

100. Huiping Li, Harrison Campbell, and Steven Fernandez, "Residential Segregation, Spatial Mismatch and Economic Growth across US Metropolitan Areas," *Urban Studies* 50, no. 13 (2013): 2642–2660.

101. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*.

102. James Laurence, "Reconciling the Contact and Threat Hypotheses: Does Ethnic Diversity Strengthen or Weaken Community Inter-Ethnic Relations?," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 8 (2014): 1328–1349.

distinct from its effects on a *perceptual* outcome, such as sensing a threat to Whites' interests.[103]

Research into the latter is limited. Because the segregation of Blacks may either remove them from the public eye[104] or increase the salience of high-density Black areas,[105] it is unclear whether racial segregation increases or decreases the expression of prejudicial views.[106] Similarly understudied is how attitudes might vary according to the income segregation of a given area. The first half of this chapter demonstrated that segregation by class intersected with segregation by race in laying the foundations for the racialization of welfare; moreover, income segregation has increased in recent decades along with a rise in income inequality.[107] It is not certain, however, whether exposure to the poor would inform people of a greater need for welfare support, or provoke more negative views of welfare recipients.[108] This lack of clarity partly reflects the complexity of measuring the spatial distribution of households by either race or income. However, thanks to a range of indices measuring specific aspects of segregation, there is scope to build on the emerging literature considering segregation as a factor likely to shape the expression of racialized policy preferences.[109]

In sum, scholars have poorly theorized Whites' active perception of their surroundings in research on either the contextual dynamics of racial threat, or the individual-level expression of racialized policy preferences. I fill this gap by analyzing welfare preferences as they

103. For more on the distinction between the experiential as opposed to perceptual dimensions of sharing urban space with a racial outgroup, see Thomas F. Pettigrew, Ulrich Wagner, and Oliver Christ, "Population Ratios and Prejudice: Modelling Both Contact and Threat Effects," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 4 (2010): 635–650. These authors also offer an example of work pointing out the potentially counterdirectional effects that might follow from a growth in the size of a minority population: such growth could signal greater potential for positive intergroup contact, but also greater potential for a perceived threat posed by the minority. Similar dynamics are discussed in Rene R. Rocha and Rodolfo Espino, "Racial Threat, Residential Segregation, and the Policy Attitudes of Anglos," *Political Research Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (2009): 415–426. I limit the scope of my inquiry to the potential threat associated with the larger minority population, given my interest in how the visual stigmas of welfare offer a bridge between White racial attitudes and welfare preferences.

104. Blalock, *Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations*; Steven Spitzer, "Toward a Marxian Theory of Deviance," *Social Problems* 22, no. 5 (1975): 638–651.

105. Brian J. Stults and Eric P. Baumer, "Racial Context and Police Force Size: Evaluating the Empirical Validity of the Minority Threat Perspective," *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 2 (2007): 507–546.

106. For example, see the contradictory findings of Taylor, "How White Attitudes Vary with the Racial Composition of Local Populations: Numbers Count" and Donald R. Kinder and Tali Mendelberg, "Cracks in American Apartheid: The Political Impact of Prejudice among Desegregated Whites," *Journal of Politics* 57, no. 02 (1995): 402.

107. Sean F. Reardon and Kendra Bischoff, "Income Inequality and Income Segregation," *American Journal of Sociology* 116, no. 4 (2011): 1092–1153; But, see also John R. Logan et al., *The Uptick in Income Segregation: Real Trend or Random Sampling Variance*, technical report 23656 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2017), http://www.nber.org/papers/w23656.

108. Louise Bamfield and Tim Horton, *Understanding Attitudes to Tackling Economic Inequality*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2009.

109. See also Brady Baybeck, "Sorting Out the Competing Effects of Racial Context," *Journal of Politics* 68, no. 2 (2006): 386–396; Rocha and Espino, "Racial Threat, Residential Segregation, and the Policy Attitudes of Anglos."

are shaped by both Whites' racial attitudes and the contexts of racial diversity and poverty to which Whites are exposed.

2.2.2 A contextual model of welfare preferences

I now outline a theory to test my conjecture that welfare preferences will be more racialized where the stigmas of welfare are more visible. I theorize, first, the responsiveness of racial attitudes to contextual cues; second, why different racial attitudes should be activated depending on the cue that is seen; and third, the potential for not only the presence but also the patterning of populations associated with welfare receipt to determine the salience of welfare's racialized image in a given context.

The responsiveness of attitudes to context

Research in political psychology supports the idea that local context will affect the salience of race or poverty, albeit looking beyond a geographic definition of context. Studies of racial priming, for example, offer compelling evidence that racial attitudes become more influential in political decision-making when these attitudes are made more accessible—or more quickly and easily retrieved—after exposure to a stimulus related to race.[110] The psychological process at play here is one akin to Zaller's model of attitudinal formation, which identifies political awareness as the crucial link determining whether individuals' preexisting values and beliefs are translated into their political preferences.[111] Zaller argues that whether a predisposition informs someone's survey response depends on whether the respondent possesses the "contextual information" connecting this predisposition to the issue being surveyed.

Christopher Weber et al. extend this logic to the racial threat hypothesis by identifying a stronger relationship between racial stereotypes and policy preferences in racially diverse settings.[112] These authors set a precedent for challenging the literature's conventional focus on how racial attitudes

110. Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*; Valentino, Hutchings, and White, "Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes during Campaigns."
111. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*.
112. Christopher R. Weber et al., "Placing Racial Stereotypes in Context: Desirability and the Politics of Racial Hostility," *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 1 (2014): 63–78.

themselves vary across context, instead asking in what circumstances negative orientations toward out-groups are likely to be consequential for politics.[113] This shift nods to research in political economy that has identified how context (i.e. the structure of a welfare state) conditions the relevance of individual-level factors to social policy preferences.[114] Investigating the conditioning effects of context also recognizes that racial attitudes themselves tend to be remarkably stable over time, whereas racial threat is a situational phenomenon.[115]

While Weber et al. offer a strong foundation for my approach, these authors operationalize racial context alone. I investigate Whites' responses to racial *and* economic context on the understanding that either could indicate the salience of welfare's image. Because both Blackness itself and concentrated, urban poverty are visual stigmas of welfare use, measures of the Black population share or central city poverty rate should serve to indicate the salience of welfare's racialized image in a given setting. When that image is easily accessible, racial attitudes are more likely to be invoked in opposition to welfare spending, serving a psychological "need" to defend one's way of life.[116] We might also call this the "activation" of racial attitudes per Nicholas Winter's framework, given that debates over welfare involve the building blocks of prejudice that Winter suggests are necessary for prejudice to be activated: (1) a clear ingroup-outgroup divide, (2) a recognition of inequality between the groups, and (3) explanations for this inequality (e.g. the "culture of poverty").[117]

Although this argument implies that a White individual would possess the same racial predispositions regardless of setting, I am cautious in posing racial attitudes as exogenous to context. Similarly, it is possible that Whites' orientations toward Blacks and public spending reflect regional or state culture. I discuss how I account for these considerations when presenting my results in Chapter 3. Ultimately, it remains crucial to question the frequent assumption that the *relationship* between racial attitudes and welfare preferences is exogenous to context. Furthermore, I expect that measures of Black population share or poverty rate will not independently predict a White individual's probability of expressing a particular welfare preference. The contextual measures

113. See also Yamil Ricardo Velez and Howard Lavine, "Racial Diversity and the Dynamics of Authoritarianism," *Journal of Politics* 79, no. 2 (2017): 519–533.

114. See, for example, J. Gingrich and B. Ansell, "Preferences in Context: Micro Preferences, Macro Contexts, and the Demand for Social Policy," *Comparative Political Studies* 45, no. 12 (2012): 1624–1654; Jane Gingrich, "Visibility, Values, and Voters: The Informational Role of the Welfare State," *Journal of Politics* 76, no. 2 (2014): 565–580.

115. Enos, "What the Demolition of Public Housing Teaches Us about the Impact of Racial Threat on Political Behavior."

116. Daniel Katz, "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1960): 163–204.

117. Winter, *Dangerous Frames: How Ideas about Race and Gender Shape Public Opinion*.

should instead reveal their significance *in relation to* a White individual's existing racial attitudes, resulting in a heightened effect of racial attitudes when race or poverty is salient.

Two measures of racial attitudes

What attitudes would be amplified by the salience of race or poverty? I build on the work of scholars who argue that racial attitudes are multidimensional and expect more than one formulation of prejudice to operate in defense of Whites' interests.[118] Moreover, if racial attitudes are akin to predispositions in Zaller's model, then the attitude that is brought to bear on welfare preferences should depend on the contextual information that is provided.

Accordingly, I operationalize two racial attitudes that should lead Whites to construe either a large Black population or a high poverty rate as a threat. The first follows from Gilens's finding that endorsing the traditional stereotype of Blacks as lazy strongly predicts opposition to welfare. Because welfare is associated with Blacks, a White individual who believes Blacks are inherently lazy is likely to think of welfare as money spent on the undeserving poor.

The second racial attitude I measure is a more nuanced expression of prejudice, introduced by Donald Kinder and David Sears as "symbolic racism"[119] and later re-formulated as "modern racism"[120] or "racial resentment."[121] All of these use the rhetoric of egalitarianism to normalize racial inequality, oppose "special favors" for Blacks, and deny that discrimination rather than lack of effort explains why Blacks remain disproportionately poor. Whites holding these views would oppose welfare spending not because they think all Blacks are inherently lazy, but because the term "welfare" recalls images of the Black poor who are believed to violate American values of self-reliance and discipline. This is a subtler view than a racial stereotype: it posits the prevalence of poverty among Blacks, rather than race itself, as a sign of Blacks' lesser commitment to hard work.

118. Bobo, "Whites' Opposition to Busing: Symbolic Racism or Realistic Group Conflict?"; Lawrence Bobo and James R. Kluegel, "Opposition to Race-Targeting: Self-Interest, Stratification Ideology, or Racial Attitudes?," *American Sociological Review* 58, no. 4 (1993): 443.

119. Donald R. Kinder and David O. Sears, "Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism Versus Racial Threats to the Good Life," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40, no. 3 (1981): 414–431.

120. John B. McConahay, "Modern Racism, Ambivalence, and the Modern Racism Scale," in *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism*, ed. John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner (New York: Academic Press, 1986), 91–126.

121. Kinder and Sanders, *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*; Michael Tesler, *Post-Racial or Most-Racial? Race and Politics in the Obama Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

My approach to operationalizing this attitude follows previous scholars' extraction of a symbolic racism factor from the GSS (discussed in the next chapter), which helps ensure the external validity of my measure. However, I use the term "racial resentment" throughout the thesis to refer to this sort of prejudice. In part, my decision aims to avoid entering the debate over symbolic racism itself. The loudest critics, most notably Paul Sniderman and co-authors, argue that symbolic racism does not measure racism at all but instead captures principled, conservative views about the appropriateness of government action to reduce racial inequality.[122] In response to this claim, other scholars have demonstrated that principled conservatism fails to predict conservative stances on issues unrelated to race.[123] I by no means suggest this is an unimportant debate, and will engage throughout my analysis with the possibility that my symbolic racism/racial resentment measure captures conservatism as well as racial animosity. Yet, my goal is not to adjudicate between various ways to measure prejudice, but instead to shift emphasis toward understanding how prejudice operates.

Both racial resentment and the laziness stereotype hold that Blacks have a substandard work ethic, whether intrinsically or just generally. Yet, these attitudes are not identical. Consider how each attitude would respond to a middle-income Black family. Whites who consider Blacks inherently lazy would see this family as an exception to the rule (if the Black family's success is believed to be a product of hard work), or perhaps as evidence of success gained by disingenuous means (if the Black family's success is believed to be the product, for example, of manipulating the welfare system). Whites who are racially resentful, on the other hand, would see the middle-income Black family as proof of their argument: if only more Blacks would work harder, like this family has, then fewer Black people would be poor.

Where this descriptive difference becomes a functional one is in the unique relationships we should expect between each racial attitude and local geography. The laziness stereotype explicitly posits race as an indication of someone's work ethic and consequential deservingness of poverty assistance. If skin color functions as a cue bringing the idea that Blacks are lazy to the top of a White observer's mind, then the salience of Black residents in a White individual's surroundings should predict the accessibility of this stereotype. Taking the percentage of Blacks

122. Paul M. Sniderman and Thomas Piazza, *The Scar of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
123. Howard Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Jim Sidanius, Felicia Pratto, and Lawrence Bobo, "Racism, Conservatism, Affirmative Action, and Intellectual Sophistication: A Matter of Principled Conservatism or Group Dominance?," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, no. 3 (1996): 476–490.

in a metropolitan area as a proxy for the salience of a Black population, then agreement with the laziness stereotype should be more predictive of opposition to welfare among Whites who live in settings with a larger Black presence.

On the other hand, racial resentment uses the lower average economic status of Blacks, rather than skin color itself, as an indicator of deservingness that explains inequality between Whites and Blacks. Thus, racial resentment should be more accessible in settings where poverty, not race, is salient. In order to compare Whites who live in settings with a similar Black presence, I control for the Black population share when positing a relationship between racial resentment and local poverty rates. However, it should not be necessary that *Black* poverty is salient in Whites' surroundings for the salience of poverty in general to increase the accessibility of racial resentment. Poverty is a structural condition of the American racial order, disproportionately affecting Blacks thanks to a history of oppression, and often viewed by Whites through a racial lens. Even the salience of *non-Black* urban poverty should make the imagery of the Black poor more accessible, and thus make Whites more likely to draw on racial resentment when evaluating welfare.

To test these conjectures, I corroborate the relationship between racial animus and opposition to welfare that has been identified in prior work, before positing two parallel interactions between racial attitudes and context. My expectations are summarized in the following hypotheses:

> **Racial attitude hypothesis**: Holding either traditionally prejudicial or racially resentful views will make a White individual more likely to oppose welfare.
>
> **Threat hypothesis 1**: Whites who hold traditionally racist views are more likely to oppose welfare in metropolitan areas where a larger share of the population is Black.
>
> **Threat hypothesis 2**: Whites who hold racially resentful views are more likely to oppose welfare in metropolitan areas where the poverty rate is higher.

The third hypothesis above merits one further comment. Even if racial resentment (or symbolic racism) captures conservatism more than racial animus, identifying the amplified effect of this attitude on welfare preferences in settings where poverty is more salient would be valuable. Such a finding would reveal that attitudes about inequality between racial groups—whether reflective of animus or not—are responsive to economic context.

2.2.3 The role of segregation in shaping surroundings

The relationships proposed above assume that the salience of race or poverty in a given setting is determined by the presence of either a Black population or a low-income population. Yet, patterns of residential segregation could also affect salience by making these populations more or less visible in the landscape of a metropolitan area. In a final step of analysis, I examine whether not only the presence of but also Whites' *exposure* to racial diversity or poverty affects the relationship between racial attitudes and welfare preferences—even when comparing metropolitan areas with identical demographics.

Although researchers actively debate how to improve measures of racial segregation, it is widely understood as a multidimensional phenomenon.[124] The five dimensions identified in Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton's seminal study include evenness, exposure, clustering, centralization, and concentration as related but distinct factors reflecting the residential patterning of racial groups.[125] Income segregation, too, can be measured in a variety of ways, accounting for the relative clustering of poor households as opposed to affluent households; the scale at which households are sorted by income; and the intersection of income segregation with racial segregation.[126]

I choose to employ two indices that measure segregation as the degree of exposure between groups in residential settings—whether White households sharing neighborhoods with Black households, or non-poor households sharing neighborhoods with poor households. I discuss these measures in greater depth in the next chapter, but both indicate higher exposure in metropolitan areas where neighborhoods are more mixed, and lower exposure where neighborhoods are more homogeneous in their racial or economic makeup. Both measures are also reflective of the underlying proportion of either Black or poor households. This follows from the fact that exposure to a group is limited by how large the group is to begin with—but it also makes measuring segregation as exposure a good complement for my racial threat models, which focus on the proportion of Black or poor residents of an area.

124. Two examples of newer measures include Logan and Parman's measure based on next-door neighbors, and Ananat and Washington's measure using railroads as an instrumental variable (based on the ease of segregation in cities that were crisscrossed by more railroad tracks). See Logan and Parman, "The National Rise in Residential Segregation" and Elizabeth Oltmans Ananat, "The Wrong Side(s) of the Tracks: The Causal Effects of Racial Segregation on Urban Poverty and Inequality," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 3, no. 2 (2011): 34–66.

125. Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, "The Dimensions of Residential Segregation," *Social Forces* 67, no. 2 (1988): 281–315.

126. Reardon and Bischoff, "Income Inequality and Income Segregation"; See also Quillian, "Segregation and Poverty Concentration: The Role of Three Segregations."

Although we can apply the logic of exposure to both the racial and income segregation measures, it is crucial to appreciate how the dispersal of lower-income households as opposed to Black households would affect the visibility of these respective populations. The visual stigmas of poverty are often environmental, stemming from signs of disorder related to disinvestment from poor communities.[127] Accordingly, low-income households are likely to be less visible when dispersed throughout mixed income areas, and the poor/non-poor divide is likely to be less prominent.[128]

Racial integration, on the other hand, does not make an individual Black household less racially identifiable. While Whites could be more aware of concentrated Black populations than dispersed ones, Blackness is a powerful visual stimulus when only a single face is present.[129] Particularly when comparing areas with similar Black population shares, race would likely be more salient when a Black household lives in a White household's neighborhood than when thinking of a concentrated Black community across town.

This reasoning informs my expectation that the effect of the Black laziness stereotype on welfare preferences will be amplified in settings where there is *greater* exposure of Whites to Blacks, while the effect of racial resentment will be amplified where there is *lesser* exposure of the non-poor to the poor. In both cases, I expect a stronger relationship between racial attitudes and welfare preferences in settings where either racial diversity or poverty is more visible based on residential segregation. Two final hypotheses summarize these expectations.

> **Exposure hypothesis 1**: Whites who hold traditionally racist views are more likely to oppose welfare in metropolitan areas that are *less* segregated by race.
>
> **Exposure hypothesis 2**: Whites who hold racially resentful views are more likely to oppose welfare in metropolitan areas that are *more* segregated by income.

The above hypotheses prompt another consideration of whether racial attitudes are endogenous to contextual measures, particularly in the case of racial segregation. Racial attitudes likely have some influence on Whites' tendency to prefer majority-White neighborhoods—a key factor explain-

127. Robert J. Sampson, Jeffrey D. Morenoff, and Felton Earls, "Beyond Social Capital: Spatial Dynamics of Collective Efficacy for Children," *American Sociological Review* 64, no. 5 (1999): 633–660.
128. Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook, "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2001): 415–444.
129. Jennifer L. Eberhardt et al., "Seeing Black: Race, Crime, and Visual Processing," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87, no. 6 (2004): 876–893.

ing the persistence of racial segregation.[130] Thus, it is possible that the level of racial segregation in a given metropolitan area is, in part, a product of the racial attitudes of the Whites who live there. While keeping this potential endogeneity in mind, two further considerations suggest that exploring the relevance of racial segregation to Whites' welfare preferences remains a valid approach.

First, even in metropolitan areas where Whites share neighborhoods with Blacks, racial barriers often persist on a micro level.[131] This phenomenon reflects the difficulty of defining "segregation" in the first place. What it means for my analysis, however, is that the most racially prejudiced Whites need not live in the most segregated metropolitan areas in order to avoid Blacks in their most proximate residential surroundings.

Second, I expect to identify a stronger effect of prejudice on welfare preferences in the *least* racially segregated areas. This finding should not simply reflect greater welfare opposition among the most prejudiced Whites because these Whites would, we assume, select into the *most* racially segregated areas. If anything, segregation may play a protective role, creating enclaves in which prejudiced Whites avoid Black neighbors and give little thought to racial diversity in their surroundings.

It is also worth remembering that patterns of segregation are not liable to change quickly. The same is true for Black population shares and poverty rates, barring an economic shock or extenuating circumstance. Thus, I do not engage with research suggesting individuals' sensitivity to contexts that are rapidly diversifying or otherwise changing in a manner that signals a threat to majority group interests.[132] Akin to Zaller's focus on individuals with higher baseline levels of political knowledge, I instead investigate the effects of what Zaller might call a "chronic awareness" of race and poverty in one's surroundings. If racial attitudes are indeed more accessible in locations where residents are chronically aware of the stigmas of welfare, then we should see a polarization in welfare preferences according to racial attitudes in such places.

Ultimately, the presence of groups across local settings would be inappropriate to analyze as if randomly distributed, rather than intertwined factors of history, culture, and politics. To that end, my predicted finding of polarized, racialized preferences resonates with prior work

130. Quillian, "Why Is Black-White Residential Segregation So Persistent? Evidence on Three Theories from Migration Data"; Maria Krysan and Michael Bader, "Perceiving the Metropolis: Seeing the City through a Prism of Race," *Social Forces* 86, no. 2 (2007): 699–733.

131. Logan and Parman, "The National Rise in Residential Segregation."

132. Daniel J. Hopkins, "The Limited Local Impacts of Ethnic and Racial Diversity," *American Politics Research* 39, no. 2 (2011): 344–379.

arguing that local norms and culture may play a role in the amplification of both prejudicial *and* tolerant attitudes among a White majority in proximity to a racial outgroup. In such settings, Whites inclined toward prejudicial stances may feel more social pressure or social support to do so. On the other hand, Whites inclined toward tolerance who live in the same settings might hold their positions even more strongly, in keeping with research finding that having to stand against the social expectation can strengthen one's views.[133]

Such findings reinforce a point made by Key long ago, that policies are encountered not by "the public" but in different ways by different publics.[134] Having presented my contextual model of racialized welfare preferences, in the next chapter I turn to the empirical task of analyzing the different publics that encounter welfare policy, and the extent to which their welfare views are racialized.

133. This point is made in Pettigrew, Wagner, and Christ, "Population Ratios and Prejudice: Modelling Both Contact and Threat Effects." The authors are referring, however, to a study by Stein et al. finding the highest-density Latino counties in Texas to be sites of not only amplified prejudice among anti-Latino Whites, but also amplified tolerance among pro-Latino Whites. Robert M. Stein, Stephanie Shirley Post, and Allison L. Rinden, "Reconciling Context and Contact Effects on Racial Attitudes," *Political Research Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2000): 285–303.

134. V. O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), quoted in Soss and Schram, "A Public Transformed?" 121.

It is chiefly when the equilibrium in race relations is threatened that the issue of the Negro comes to the fore in political discussion.

- V.O. Key (1949)
Southern Politics in State and Nation

3

Polarized Preferences: The Activation of Racial Attitudes

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The previous chapter made the point that White opposition to welfare spending is influenced by Whites' racial prejudices, and supported by the architecture of segregation and urban inequality that has fueled White perceptions of the Black poor as undeserving of support. Yet, conventional analyses of Whites' welfare preferences ignore the relevance of geography in indicating the salience of welfare's racialized image in a given setting, and the related likelihood that a White individual will draw on his or her racial attitudes when forming an opinion on welfare spending.

In this chapter, I offer evidence for my claim that two types of racial attitudes—a traditional stereotype as well as racial resentment—have starkly different effects on welfare preferences depending on geographic context. I begin by overviewing my empirical approach to analyzing

geocoded data from the GSS following the 1996 welfare policy reforms. I then report my main findings: the racial geography of an area amplifies the effect of traditional prejudice on welfare preferences, whereas economic geography amplifies the effect of racially resentful attitudes. Racial attitudes are more predictive of welfare preferences in settings of greater racial diversity or poverty, supporting my argument that Whites' welfare preferences are more racialized where the stigmas associated with welfare are more visible.

The rest of the chapter confirms and extends these results. I confirm the robustness of my findings through a number of additional tests, in addition to presenting corroborating evidence from the 2000 ANES. I then extend my findings by considering how segregation shapes Whites' subjective perceptions of their surroundings, offering evidence that the effect of racial attitudes on welfare preferences is also likely to be amplified where residential segregation makes race or poverty more visible from the perspective of Whites.

3.1 Data and Methods

A contextualized analysis of Whites' racialized welfare preferences requires data not only about what a representative sample of Whites think about welfare, but also about the local environments those Whites inhabit. With access to the GSS Sensitive Data Files, I am able to account for the racial and economic diversity to which respondents are exposed in metropolitan areas across the United States when analyzing public opinion on racial issues.[1]

My dependent variable measures non-Hispanic White Americans' evaluations of welfare spending as of 2000. Locating my analysis in this year offers contextual data and segregation measures based on the 2000 decennial census, as well as proximity to the 1996 reforms, when the national salience of welfare would have made welfare opinions more sensitive to contextual cues.[2] I recode responses to a question asking whether the country spends "too much, too little,

1. Sensitive Data Files of the GSS were obtained under special contractual arrangements designed to protect the anonymity of respondents. These data are not available from the author. Persons interested in obtaining GSS Sensitive Data Files should contact the GSS at GSS@NORC.org.

2. Hopkins, "Politicized Places: Explaining Where and When Immigrants Provoke Local Opposition."

or about the right amount on welfare" to create a binary variable that captures opposition to existing spending levels ("too much"= 1).

3.1.1 Individual-level variables

I operationalize the Black laziness stereotype using Whites' evaluations of Blacks as either lazy or hardworking on a 1-7 scale. I adjust these values by each respondent's corresponding evaluation of Whites' work ethic and rescale the variable between 0 and 10, with higher values reflecting placement of Blacks closer to lazy (M = 5.31, $S.D.$ = 1.31).

I operationalize racial resentment by conducting exploratory factor analysis on five variables from the 2000 GSS. I replicate the analysis of Christopher Tarman and David Sears to add external validity to my measure.[3] The resulting racial resentment factor captures agreement with three beliefs. First, worse outcomes for Blacks are due to a lack of motivation to succeed; second, Blacks no longer face discrimination; and third, Blacks should "work their way up" as other minority groups have. Factor loadings are reported in Table 3.1.

Note that I keep the racial resentment factor produced by the factor analysis but discard the old-fashioned racism factor. I instead choose to focus on the Black laziness stereotype as a measure of traditional prejudice, given the centrality of this particular belief in explaining opposition to welfare. The racial resentment variable is also scaled between 0 and 10, with higher values reflecting more resentful attitudes (M = 5.65, $S.D.$ = 2.48).[4]

Comparing the two variables supports a multidimensional approach to conceptualizing racial animus. Figure 3.1 illustrates the 0.47 correlation between the laziness stereotype and racial resentment.

3. See Christopher Tarman and David O. Sears, "The Conceptualization and Measurement of Symbolic Racism," *Journal of Politics* 67, no. 3 (2005): 731–761. These authors conduct factor analysis on five GSS surveys administered between 1994 and 2000 in order to demonstrate consistency in the conceptual distinction between old-fashioned racism and racial resentment over time. My only departure from Tarman and Sears is my decision not to include a question about whether interracial marriage should be legal. By the time of the 2000 survey, this question is answered by so few that I eliminate it in order to not limit my racial resentment scale to a small number of survey responses. Furthermore, while the variable I derive is specified as "symbolic racism" by Tarman and Sears, the same fundamental ideas inform other conceptualizations of contemporary prejudice; I adopt the terminology of "racial resentment," as discussed in the previous chapter.

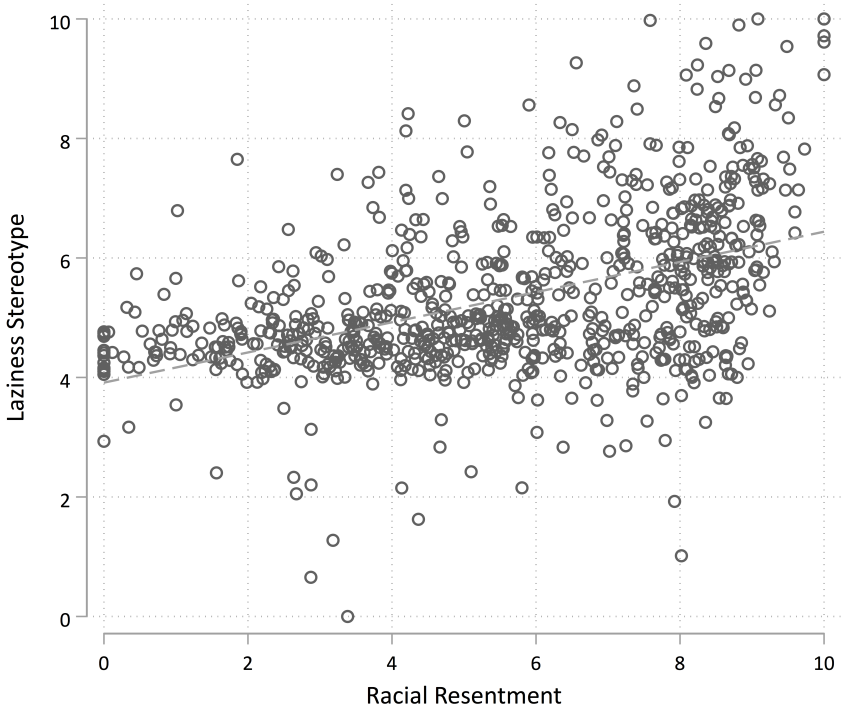
4. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy for the variables included in the factor analysis is 0.66, above the recommended value of 0.60. Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant (p = 0.00) supporting a rejection of the null hypothesis that the variables are noncollinear and thus unsuitable for structure detection.

Table 3.1: Racial Attitude Factor Loadings

	SR Factor	OFR Factor
Symbolic racism (SR)		
Discrimination not responsible for racial disparities	**0.49**	-0.13
Lack of motivation is responsible for disparities	**0.47**	0.26
Blacks should work their way up; no special favors	**0.51**	0.10
Old-fashioned racism (OFR)		
Lack of inborn ability is responsible for disparities	0.02	**0.48**
Blacks lack intelligence (compared to whites)	0.11	**0.44**
Interfactor correlation = 0.36		

Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 2,213). Table reports coefficients from exploratory factor analysis, oblique rotations, including all non-Black respondents. Factor loadings exceeding 0.40 are bolded. Note that only the symbolic racism (SR) factor is used for the present analysis, although I refer to this measure more generally as "racial resentment."

Figure 3.1: Correlation between Racial Attitude Variables



Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 1,224). Figure visualizes where Whites in GSS sample rank on measures of both traditional prejudice and racial resentment.

Additional control variables for age and education are measured in years, whereas binary variables are used to represent gender (male = 1) and marital status (married = 1). Income is

measured in 2000 dollars; partisanship is measured with dummy variables reflecting identification as a Democrat, Independent, or Republican.[5]

3.1.2 Contextual variables

I measure racial and economic context at the level of the metropolitan statistical area (MSA). Given the politicization of welfare in regard to urban, Black poverty, I focus on public opinion among non-rural Whites.[6] The higher density of MSAs also makes them settings where residents would be aware of visually identifiable communities associated with welfare.

As discussed in Chapter 1, no study assigning a role to context is immune from the modifiable areal unit problem (MAUP), or the propensity for the relationship between variables to depend on the scale and shape of the geographic container used for analysis.[7] Measuring context at the metropolitan level mitigates this concern on two accounts. First, MSA boundaries should be large enough to capture indicators related to the visibility of welfare's stigmas even if people are sorted into neighborhoods by race or income. Although concerns of self-selection even at the neighborhood level may be overstated, it is costlier to move to a new metropolitan area than it is to move to a more favorable neighborhood within the same area.[8] Second, people are likely to cross county lines in their daily activities and be consumers of a media market that reports on issues in the wider area.[9] MSAs are therefore reasonable containers in which Whites would be aware of the presence of Black communities, as well as low-income ones. A final advantage of MSAs is that they are the units for which segregation is typically measured.

I thus isolate the 1,569 Whites in the 2000 GSS sample who are located in 95 MSAs. I incorporate racial demographics using the percentage of Black residents in each MSA as of the

5. I do not simultaneously control for ideology in order to reduce the collinearity or endogeneity of using self-placement on a left-right scale to predict a dependent variable that likely informs ideological self-definition in the first place; see Dara Z. Strolovitch, "Playing Favorites: Public Attitudes Toward Race- and Gender-Targeted Anti-Discrimination Policy," *NWSA Journal* 10, no. 3 (1998): 27–53. There is a good chance that opposing government spending on anti-poverty programs leads someone to identify as conservative rather than vice versa.

6. "Non-rural" refers to all respondents living near an urban center with a population of at least 50,000. Where applicable, I use data for Metropolitan Divisions, the subcategories into which the 11 largest MSAs are divided.

7. Fotheringham and Wong, "The Modifiable Areal Unit Problem in Multivariate Statistical Analysis."

8. Eric Kaufmann and Gareth Harris, "'White Flight' or Positive Contact? Local Diversity and Attitudes to Immigration in Britain," *Comparative Political Studies* 48, no. 12 (2015): 1563–1590.

9. Roy L. Behr and Shanto Iyengar, "Television News, Real-World Cues, and Changes in the Public Agenda," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (1985): 38–57.

2000 census, log transformed to account for the variable's right-skewed distribution. I incorporate economic context with a measure of the percentage of individuals living under the federal poverty line in the central city of an MSA, which aims to capture the salience of urban poverty. Although there is overlap between high-density Black MSAs and high-poverty MSAs, the maps in Figure 3.2 reveal that there is considerable divergence, too. For example, a number of MSAs in the Southwest and West with large Hispanic populations have high poverty rates but small Black populations. Cases such as these offer the opportunity to investigate how the local salience of poverty can activate racial resentment even in the absence of a sizeable Black population.

For additional support, I repeat my analysis using county-level statistics on race and poverty in order to check the robustness of the relationships I identify at the metropolitan area level, thus heeding the warnings of the MAUP.[10] Finally, data on racial and income segregation are drawn from the US2010 Project at Brown University; these measures are discussed in greater detail below.[11]

3.1.3 Empirical analysis

Data are analyzed using binary logistic regression, with all results reported as odds ratios. Although the dataset contains individuals clustered in MSAs, hierarchical analysis of the data produces an intraclass correlation coefficient of only 0.01 in a null model. This statistic indicates that there is minimal unobserved correlation between the individuals residing within the same metropolitan area, falling short of the typical intraclass correlation threshold of 0.10 that would indicate the appropriateness of multilevel modeling. The dataset further has a small cluster size (an average of 9.5 respondents per metropolitan area), which reduces the need for a multilevel model.[12]

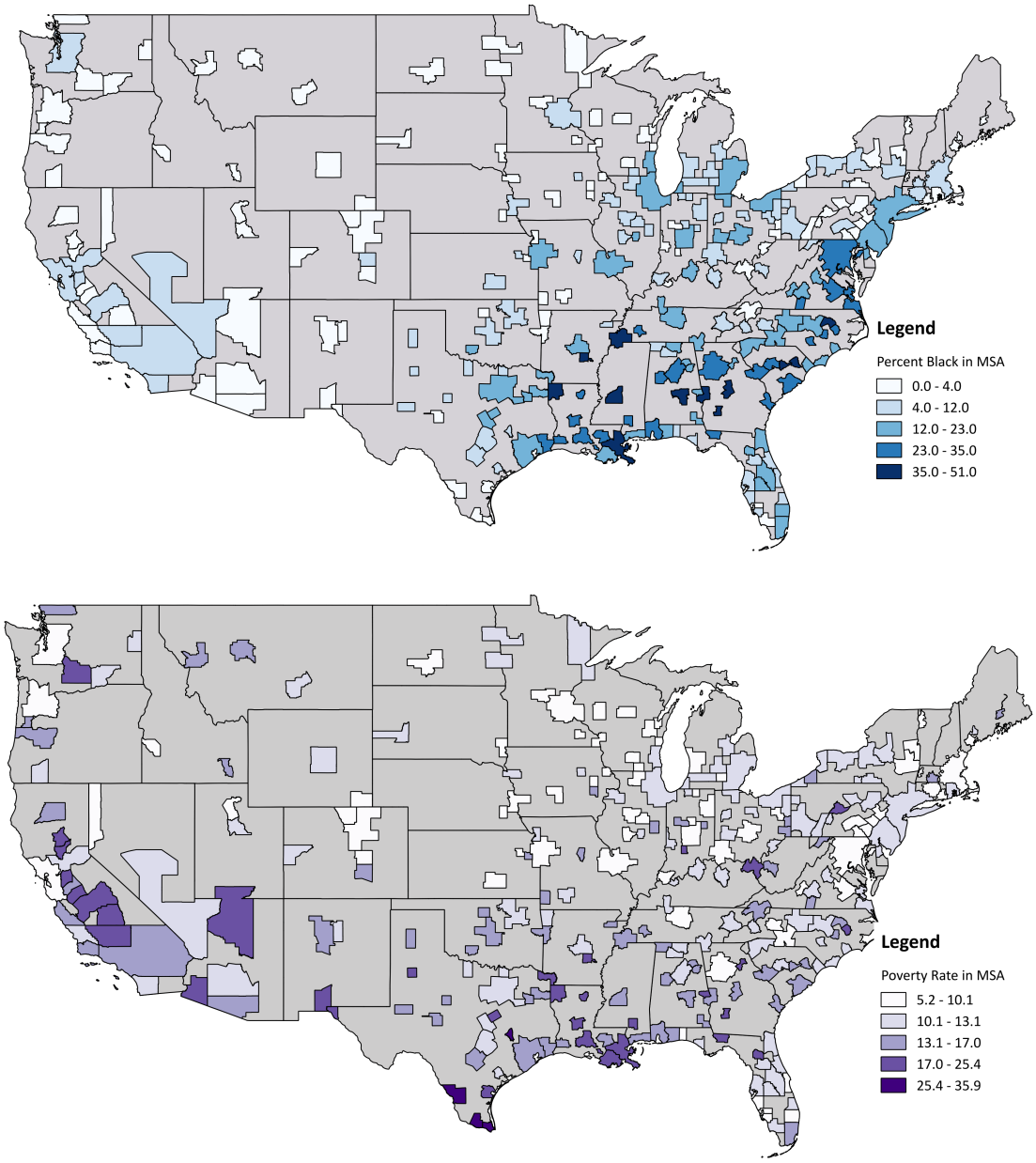
However, even a small intraclass correlation can increase the Type I error rate. To make my analysis more robust against identifying a relationship between geography and welfare preferences where none exists, I cluster standard errors by metropolitan area. This step allows for correlation between observations in the same MSA, which increases the size of the confidence

10. Repeating one's analysis using different contextual containers is recommended by W. K. Tam Cho and N. Baer, "Environmental Determinants of Racial Attitudes Redux: The Critical Decisions Related to Operationalizing Context," *American Politics Research* 39, no. 2 (2011): 414–436.

11. Logan, *Separate and Unequal: The Neighborhood Gap for Blacks, Hispanics and Asians in Metropolitan America*.

12. Joop Hox, *Multilevel Analysis: Techniques and Applications* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

Figure 3.2: Black Population Presence and Poverty Rates by Metropolitan Area, 2000



Maps use TIGER/Line Shapefiles and census data to illustrate Black population share and poverty rates across MSAs as of 2000.

intervals in the model and raises the bar for finding significant effects of the predictor variables on welfare preferences.

3.2 Polarized Welfare Preferences in Settings of Threat

I now test the proposition that racial attitudes have a greater effect on welfare preferences in settings with a larger Black population share or higher poverty rate, depending on the racial attitude in question. My analysis reveals unique responses of traditional prejudice and racial resentment to contextual indicators related to the stigmatization of welfare.

To begin, I corroborate the link between racial attitudes and welfare preferences documented in previous research. The odds ratios reported in the first two models of Table 3.2 offer support for the *racial attitude hypothesis*: both racial attitudes are significant predictors ($p < 0.01$) of welfare preferences. In Model 1, moving across the interquartile range of the Black laziness scale (from 4.54 to 6.36) predicts a 10 percentage-point increase in the likelihood of opposing welfare. In Model 2, the equivalent move across the racial resentment scale (from 3.98 to 8.18) predicts an almost 20 percentage point increase. These changes in predicted probabilities are second only to partisanship. The average Republican has a probability of opposing welfare approximately 20 percentage points greater than the average Democrat in the model controlling for the Black laziness stereotype, and 14 percentage points greater in the model controlling for racial resentment. Education is also a significant predictor of more positive evaluations of welfare in Model 1, consistent with studies finding that more educated individuals are less likely to hold traditional stereotypes—even if they remain defensive of White interests in other ways.[13]

I next add measures of context to the analysis in order to test the two threat hypotheses. Models 3 through 5 of Table 3.2 include measures of local Black population share and poverty rate when controlling for Whites' agreement with the Black laziness stereotype. As expected, neither contextual variable on its own is a significant predictor of welfare views in Model 3. However, when controlling for an interaction between the laziness stereotype and Black population share

13. James M. Glaser, "The Preference Puzzle: Educational Differences in Racial-Political Attitudes," *Political Behavior* 23, no. 4 (2001): 313–334.

Table 3.2: Racialized Welfare Preferences in Context

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Opposition to Welfare	Individual Level		Laziness Stereotype and Context			Racial Resentment and Context		
Racial Attitudes								
Laziness Stereotype	1.263***		1.264***	0.897	0.983			
	(0.096)		(0.097)	(0.150)	(0.234)			
Racial Resentment		1.225***				1.220***	1.105	0.792
		(0.073)				(0.073)	(0.104)	(0.138)
Contextual Variables								
Percent Black (log)			0.982	0.436***	0.984	1.019	0.781	1.015
			(0.084)	(0.131)	(0.083)	(0.116)	(0.243)	(0.105)
Poverty Rate			1.001	1.001	0.931	1.025	1.026	0.891**
			(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.057)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.047)
Laziness Stereotype × Percent Black (log)				1.165**				
				(0.069)				
Laziness Stereotype × Poverty Rate					1.013			
					(0.013)			
Racial Resentment × Percent Black (log)							1.046	
							(0.045)	
Racial Resentment × Poverty Rate								1.025**
								(0.010)
Control Variables								
Age	0.992	0.992	0.992	0.992	0.992	0.993	0.993	0.994
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Gender	1.282	1.230	1.278	1.276	1.275	1.226	1.225	1.239
	(0.246)	(0.292)	(0.245)	(0.245)	(0.245)	(0.290)	(0.290)	(0.299)
Marital Status	1.132	1.063	1.130	1.130	1.135	1.099	1.109	1.090
	(0.218)	(0.258)	(0.219)	(0.221)	(0.221)	(0.271)	(0.275)	(0.284)
Education (years)	0.930**	0.950	0.930**	0.933**	0.931**	0.949	0.954	0.954
	(0.033)	(0.043)	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.046)
Income	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Independent	2.121***	2.233**	2.126***	2.145***	2.143***	2.182**	2.226**	2.292**
	(0.569)	(0.725)	(0.564)	(0.581)	(0.575)	(0.713)	(0.730)	(0.744)
Republican	2.418***	1.861**	2.421***	2.407***	2.431***	1.840**	1.863**	1.869**
	(0.570)	(0.517)	(0.569)	(0.575)	(0.576)	(0.515)	(0.523)	(0.534)
Constant	0.444	0.360	0.450	2.513	1.655	0.228	0.360	2.332
	(0.352)	(0.298)	(0.380)	(2.678)	(2.009)	(0.221)	(0.370)	(2.820)
Observations	512	361	512	512	512	361	361	361
p	0.000000656	0.0000324	0.00000275	5.15e-08	0.00000595	0.0000880	0.000128	0.0000623
Log likelihood	-324.1	-224.3	-324.1	-321.7	-323.7	-223.6	-223.1	-220.0

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

Table reports odds ratios from logistic regression estimating probability of saying too much is spent on welfare

Source: 2000 General Social Survey; Party base category is Democrat

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

in Model 4, I find that racial geography conditions the effect of the belief that Blacks are lazy on the probability of opposing welfare spending. Model 4's significant interaction supports *threat hypothesis 1*. In metropolitan areas with a negligible Black presence, the Black laziness stereotype is less predictive of opposition to welfare; but as the Black population share increases, so does the predicted effect of holding a traditionally racist stereotype.

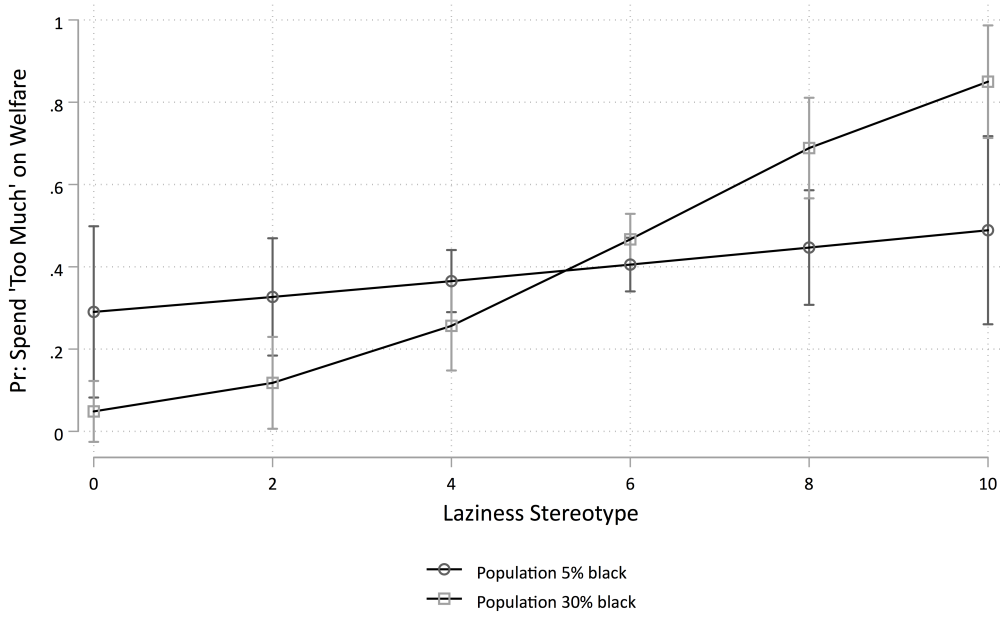
To put this interaction in substantive terms, consider an unmarried White female in the dataset, positioned at the means of all individual variables but at 7 on the 0-10 scale measuring the laziness stereotype. In a metropolitan area where only 5% of the population is Black, her odds of saying too much is spent on welfare are 41.1%. For an otherwise identical person living in a 25% Black setting, these odds would increase to 50.8%. Figure 3.3 illustrates this comparison across the Black laziness scale; the steeper slope of the dotted line represents the greater relevance of traditional racial prejudice in settings with a larger Black presence.[14] To offer additional support for the argument that a larger Black presence makes the laziness stereotype more accessible when the topic of welfare spending is mentioned, I test whether the laziness stereotype responds similarly in high-poverty settings. The results reported in Model 5 indicate that no significant interaction exists between these two variables: endorsing the stereotype that Blacks are lazy does not predict a greater likelihood of opposition to welfare in settings with higher poverty rates (holding Black population share constant).

In Models 6 through 8 of Table 3.2, I repeat the above analysis but instead control for racial resentment. I confirm in Model 6 that poverty rate does not independently influence welfare views; nor does it significantly interact with Black population share in Model 7. The interaction between poverty rate and racial resentment posited in Model 8, however, is significant ($p < 0.05$), offering evidence for *threat hypothesis 2*. The effect of racial resentment on a White individual's welfare preferences is minimized for those individuals living in settings with very low poverty rates. In higher-poverty settings, racial resentment is more predictive of opposition to welfare.

Predicted probabilities again help convey the substantive effects of the interaction term. Returning to the above example of the average single White female in the dataset and placing her at 7 on the racial resentment scale, this individual would have a 38.4% chance of saying too much is spent on welfare if she lived in a metropolitan area with a 15% poverty rate in its central city. In a

14. Note that, for ease of interpretation, all figures show the Black population share in its percentage form, rather than the logged version of this variable that I use to build the models themselves. The results are very similar in either case.

Figure 3.3: The Activation of Racial Attitudes: Estimated Effects of Traditional Racism on Welfare Preferences



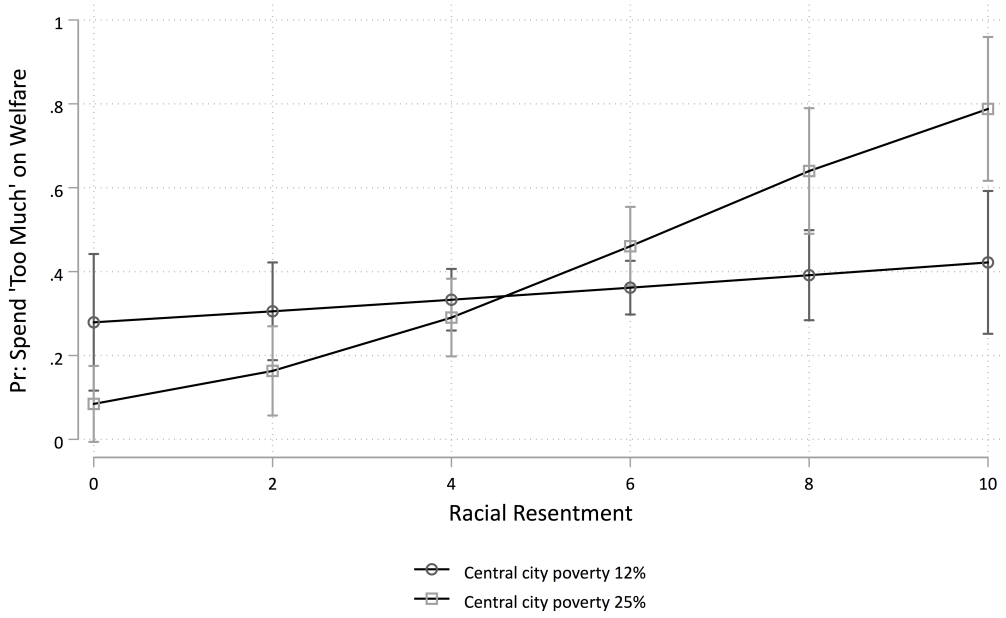
Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 512). Figure visualizes the interaction posed in Model 4 in Table 3.2.

setting where 30% of the population was poor, this probability would increase to 59.3%. Figure 3.4 visualizes the interaction analogous to that in Figure 3.3, only in this case the steeper slope of the dotted line represents the greater relevance of racial resentment in settings with higher poverty rates.

3.2.1 Summary: The polarization of preferences by racial attitudes

The findings reported so far identify unique responses of the laziness stereotype and racial resentment to the local salience of either race or poverty. Taken together, the models further reveal that *welfare preferences are more polarized by racial attitudes where welfare's racialized policy image is more accessible*—whether due to the presence of a large Black population or a high poverty rate. Figures 3.5 and 3.6 revisit the two interactions between attitudes and context in order to visualize the different effects of geography on racially prejudiced and racially tolerant Whites. In low-density Black or low-poverty MSAs, racially prejudiced Whites are no more likely than racially tolerant Whites to oppose welfare spending. Yet, as either the Black population or poverty

Figure 3.4: The Activation of Racial Attitudes: Estimated Effects of Racial Resentment on Welfare Preferences



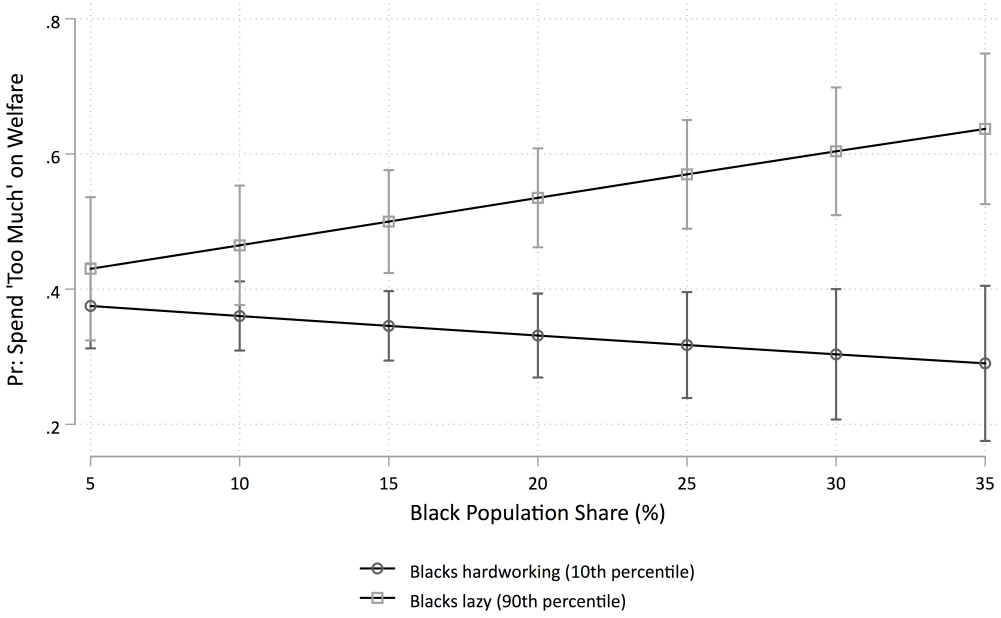
Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 361). Figure visualizes the interaction posed in Model 8 in Table 3.2.

rate increases, these probabilities diverge according to racial attitudes.

The behavior of racially prejudiced Whites is consistent with the conventional threat hypothesis. As the size of the subordinate group grows, or as resources seem scarcer in a given area, Whites are more likely to see a policy associated with Blacks as a threat to White interests. Beyond the amplification of animus, however, my findings also suggest that Whites holding more *positive* feelings about Blacks will find these orientations amplified in settings where either racial or economic geography raises the salience of contextual indicators related to welfare's policy image.

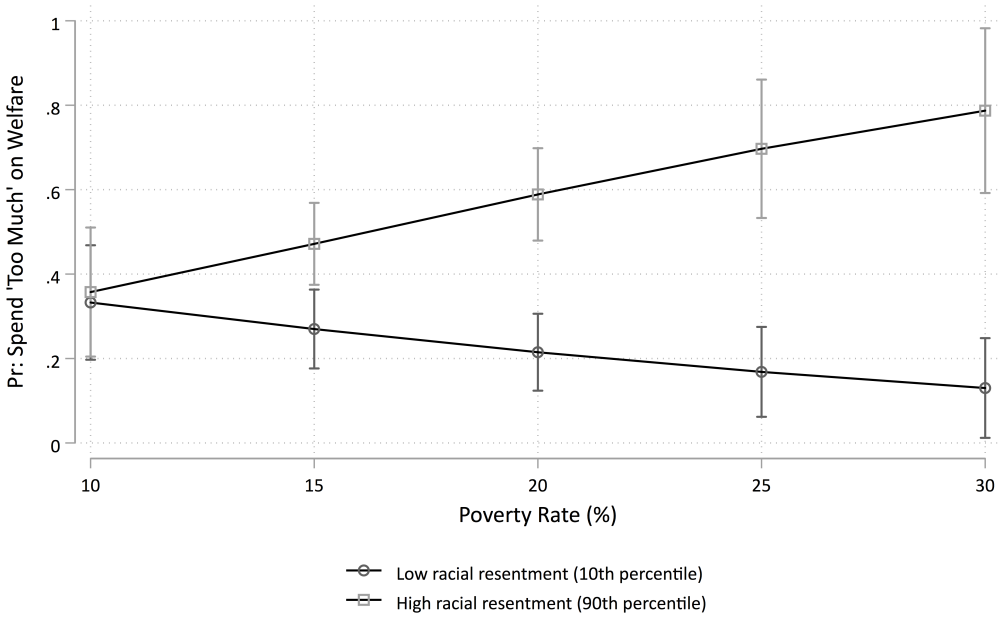
For Whites who reject the Black laziness stereotype, the view that Blacks are hardworking is likely to be more salient in areas with larger Black populations, making these Whites more likely to support welfare spending. Correspondingly, Whites who are less racially resentful—for example, those who believe that discrimination does play a role in explaining racial inequality—are predicted to be more supportive of welfare in settings of higher poverty. In other words, what someone with high racial animus perceives as a threat may be interpreted differently by Whites who are more sympathetic to Blacks.

Figure 3.5: The Polarization of Welfare Preferences by Racial Attitudes: High-Density Black Settings



Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 512). Figure visualizes the interaction posed in Model 4 in Table 3.2.

Figure 3.6: The Polarization of Welfare Preferences by Racial Attitudes: High-Poverty Settings



Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 361). Figure visualizes the interaction posed in Model 8 in Table 3.2.

It is unlikely that those with negative views of Blacks seek out settings with larger Black populations or higher poverty rates, and thus unlikely that my results are the product of self-selection by racially prejudiced Whites. On the other hand, it is possible that the behavior of the most racially tolerant Whites in the sample reflects some degree of self-selection. Members of this category may be less averse to living near either racial diversity or poverty. At the same time, few Whites in the sample hold expressly positive views of Blacks. Only 6% of the sample rate Blacks as harder-working than Whites, whereas 49% evaluate the races as equivalent. The racial resentment scale is also weighted toward the racially prejudiced end. Therefore, the polarization I identify is likely driven by the amplification of prejudice more so than the amplification of tolerance.

In sum, racial attitudes predispose Whites to express a particular opinion on welfare, but whether Whites connect these predispositions to their policy preferences depends on contextual information making the racialized dimensions of welfare salient. Moreover, the relevant contextual information depends on the attitude in question. Whites endorsing the Black laziness stereotype are more likely to perceive a Black population as an indicator of the threat welfare poses to White interests, whereas racially resentful Whites are more likely to perceive a poor population as an indication of threat. The overlapping confidence intervals in Figures 3.3 and 3.4 caution against an interpretation that racially prejudiced Whites in one metropolitan area are substantively different from their counterparts in other areas. But Figures 3.5 and 3.6 reveal that the *gap* between racially prejudiced and racially tolerant Whites is likely to be substantively different in settings with a large Black population or high poverty rate, depending on which racial attitude is in question.

3.2.2 Robustness checks and alternative explanations

Several further investigations offer additional support for the findings presented thus far: first, examining White opinion on "assistance to the poor" rather than "welfare;" second, exploring how my findings overlap with partisanship; and third, considering potential confounders in my models.

"Assistance to the poor" versus "welfare"

To begin, I have argued that it is because of welfare's politicization in regard to Black, urban poverty that the presence of either a Black or poor population will be relevant to Whites' opinions on welfare spending. To test this assertion, in Table 3.3 I repeat the analysis using another dependent variable that captures opinion on poverty assistance but uses more neutral language. "Assistance to the poor" is the phrasing the 2000 GSS used along with "welfare" in a split-sample approach, randomly asking respondents about poverty assistance using one of the two phrasings.

The relative unpopularity of welfare is apparent in the GSS dataset: 39.45% of the sample says too much is spent on welfare, compared to 13.48% among those respondents who were instead asked about assistance to the poor. Still, both racial attitude variables are predictive of opinion regarding assistance to the poor in the first two models of Table 3.3. In other words, attitudes about Blacks are implicated even when a less racialized term is used.

However, neither previously identified interaction between racial attitudes and context holds when assistance to the poor is the dependent variable. Racial geography does not make traditional racial prejudice more accessible in regard to a race-neutral reference to redistribution, and economic geography is similarly insignificant in determining the effect of racial resentment on views about assistance to the poor. In a similar vein, party identification was a significant predictor of welfare views—reflecting the Republican Party's embrace of the argument that welfare incentivizes dependency—but is not significant in predicting views on assisting the poor.

These results indicate the power of a policy narrative to make particular racial attitudes sensitive to contextual symbols associated with welfare: the term "welfare" calls to mind particular images that are not associated with the considerably less racialized term "assistance to the poor." Thus, Whites are not sensitive to their local surroundings of race or poverty when asked about assisting the poor but are indeed sensitive to these surroundings when expressing opinions about welfare.[15]

15. Note that the slight significance of Black population share in the fourth column of Table 3.3 and the simultaneous insignificance of racial resentment in that model may be a product of the small effect of Black population share in predicting higher levels of racial resentment, discussed in the next section.

Table 3.3: No Effect of Context on Opposition to Assisting the Poor

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Assisting the Poor	Laziness Stereotype		Racial Resentment	
Racial Attitudes				
Laziness Stereotype	1.418***	1.839***		
	(0.170)	(0.379)		
Symbolic Racism			1.171**	1.238
			(0.077)	(0.200)
Contextual Variables				
Percent Black (log)		1.763		0.795*
		(0.944)		(0.097)
Poverty Rate		1.005		1.037
		(0.025)		(0.067)
Laziness Stereotype		0.883		
× Percent Black (log)		(0.078)		
Symbolic Racism				0.997
× Poverty Rate				(0.009)
Constant	0.00680***	0.00212***	0.0360***	0.0301**
	(0.008)	(0.003)	(0.038)	(0.045)
Observations	505	505	347	347
p	0.247	0.0426	0.351	0.168
ll	-200.5	-199.1	-146.0	-144.6

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses
Table reports odds ratios from logistic regression estimating probability of saying too much is spent on assisting the poor; For concision, control variables are not displayed
Source: 2000 General Social Survey
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

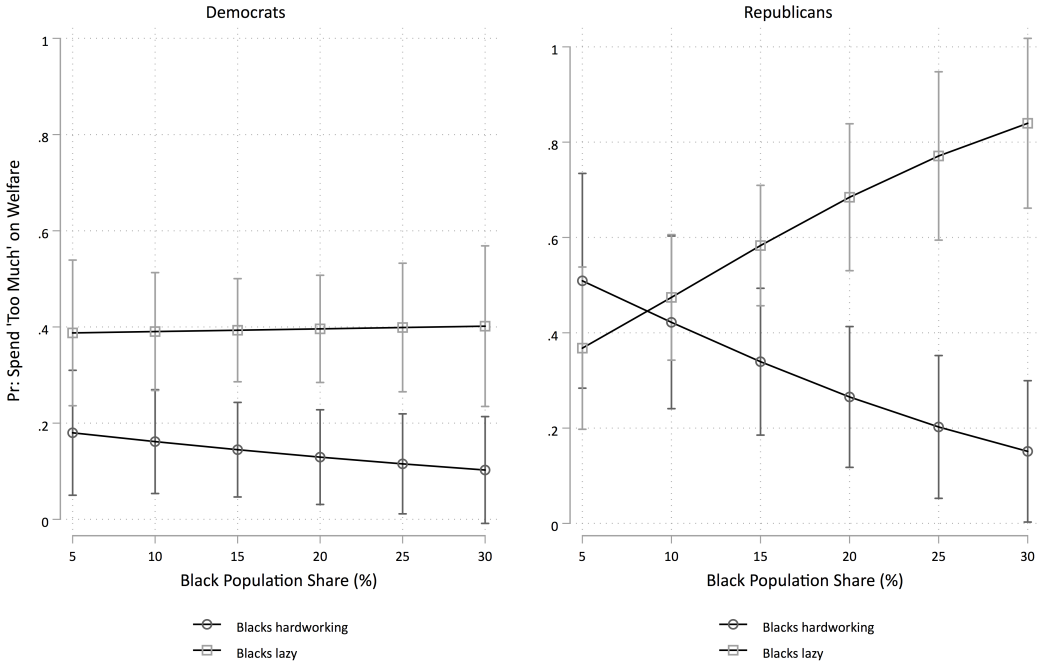
Partisanship

I next consider how my analysis of the behavior of Whites holding different racial attitudes overlaps with partisanship—which itself has become more closely aligned with orientations toward Blacks in the past few decades. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the difference in racial resentment between Republicans and Democrats on the ANES more than doubled between 1988 and 2004.[16] In the 2000 GSS, Republicans average slightly higher on the Black laziness scale (at 5.35 compared to Democrats' 5.26) and considerably higher on the racial resentment scale (at 6.18, compared to Democrats' 5.18).

Stratifying the sample by partisanship reveals that the effects reported in Table 3.2 are, in

16. Hetherington, "Review Article: Putting Polarization in Perspective."

Figure 3.7: Polarized Preferences by Partisanship: High-Density Black Settings

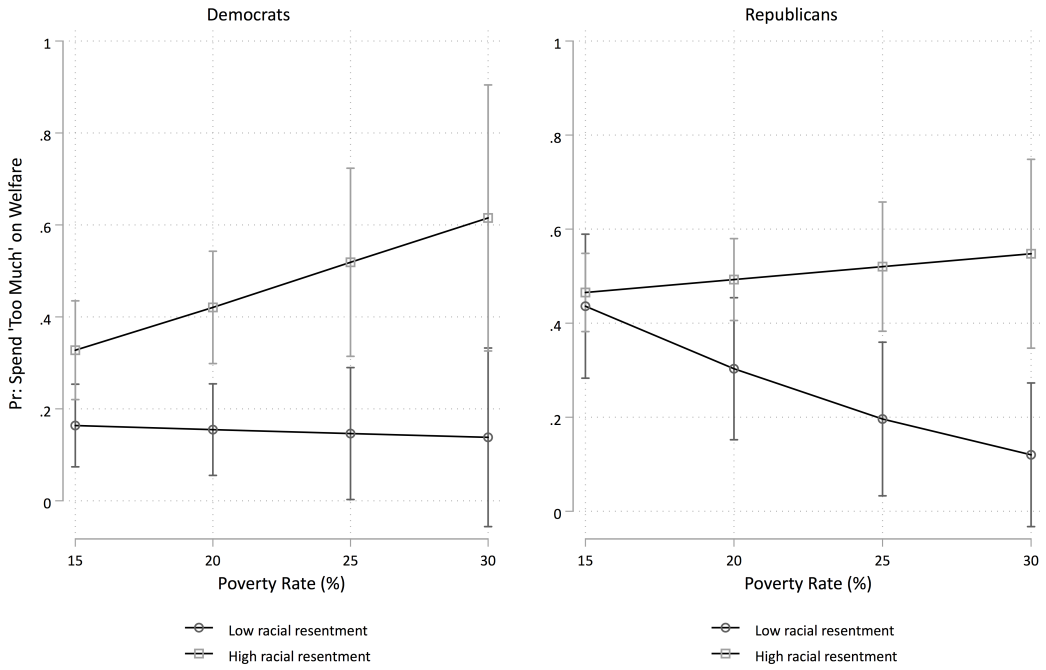


Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 512). Figure visualizes the interaction posed in Model 4 in Table 3.2, but with the sample stratified by party identification.

fact, strongest for Republican-identifying members of the sample. In the case of the traditional stereotype of Blacks as lazy, the responsiveness of this attitude to racial context is primarily driven by Republicans (Figure 3.7). Both Democrats and Republicans, however, drive the polarization of preferences according to racial resentment in higher- as opposed to lower-poverty settings (Figure 3.8).

These results are consistent with the different stances the parties took on welfare reform, as well as with the distinction I have made between traditional prejudice and racial resentment. To be clear, the racial coding of the word "welfare" stretches across partisanship: irrespective of one's orientations toward Blacks, welfare has been more closely tied to images of Black beneficiaries than "poverty assistance" has—hence the fact that positive as well as negative orientations toward Blacks are predictive of Whites' welfare preferences. However, the Republican Party more explicitly embraced characterizations of welfare recipients as lazy and thus undeserving; these are the sorts of images likely to be associated with conceptions of Blacks as inherently lazy, and thus the images we expect White Republicans who agree with the Black laziness stereotype to be sensitive to

Figure 3.8: Polarized Preferences by Partisanship: High-Poverty Settings



Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 361). Figure visualizes the interaction posed in Model 8 in Table 3.2, but with the sample stratified by party identification.

in their surroundings. White Democrats may be less likely to associate welfare spending with inherently lazy Blacks (even if they would rate Blacks as lazy if asked about it on a survey), and thus less likely to react to the presence of more Blacks with greater opposition to welfare.

In the case of racial resentment, on the other hand, and its responsiveness in higher poverty settings, both parties engaged in the larger discourse around welfare. Leading up to the 1996 reforms, Americans across the political spectrum endorsed moralistic characterizations of poverty as the consequence of insufficient motivation, and argued that the policy needed to be reformed to better encourage work. Figure 3.8 suggests that Whites whose attitudes diverge from the partisan average (Democrats with high racial resentment, or Republicans with low racial resentment) are the most susceptible to having these attitudes amplified by context. This finding fits with the idea that context serves as an additional source of information, offering cues to those cross-pressured partisans who may have views that diverge from the party line.

Addressing possible confounders

There are a number of ways to interrogate possible factors that could confound my results, related to the challenges of conducting research into the relationship between attitudes and contexts. This section discusses three additional analyses conducted to grapple with these issues—the results of which are reported in Appendix B.1, but reviewed here.

Racial attitudes as exogenous to context I first consider the validity of my decision to posit racial attitudes as exogenous to context. As discussed in the previous chapter, I recognize that, undoubtedly, we should expect some patterns in racial attitudes according to where Whites live. Previous scholarship has made just this point by applying the threat hypothesis to racial attitudes themselves, finding that prejudice is exacerbated in more diverse settings.[17] I have discussed already that such findings should not invalidate the importance of investigating the relationship between racial attitudes and policy preferences in such settings. My findings of polarization between prejudiced and tolerant Whites in diverse or high-poverty settings should show what is missed when we simply assume all Whites in a given setting will respond the same way.

The question to consider, therefore, is whether there is a strong enough relationship between Black population share and either of the racial attitude measures to raise concerns that the results reported thus far are biased. I conclude that this is unlikely based on the results reported in Appendix B.1. Even if individuals in metropolitan areas with large Black populations have slightly more negative racial attitudes to begin with, an MSA's Black population share more powerfully predicts the strength of the relationship between racial attitudes and welfare preferences.

Again, my results should not indicate that, were there to be a random reassignment of White Americans to different metropolitan areas, there would be a sudden change in the extent to which those Whites express racialized preferences about particular policies. Granted, a White individual who moved to a new location *would* likely evolve over time, if his or her new surroundings had a very different racial landscape. But the critical point is that the results here seek to illuminate geographic variation that can help us understand the varying importance of the racial attitudes

17. For example: Quillian, "Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat: Population Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe" Taylor, "How White Attitudes Vary with the Racial Composition of Local Populations: Numbers Count."

commonly measured on surveys to the political preferences Whites express—a dimension of variation that is typically ignored.

State and regional culture Following from the question of historically and culturally specific relationships between certain attitudes, depending on geography—is it simply that the differences I identify between metropolitan areas reflect variation at the regional or state level? By repeating the analysis when controlling for the region in which each MSA is located, as well as building multilevel models that nest MSAs within states, in both cases I find that the interactions between local context and racial attitudes remain significant. Reported in Appendix B.1, these results suggest that, even after accounting for unobserved factors related to the culture or history of a larger area, welfare preferences are more likely to be influenced by racial attitudes where race or poverty are more locally visible.

County versus MSA A final consideration related to potential confounders concerns my choice of geographic container, and whether my results are purely the product of how MSA boundaries are drawn. I have explained my focus on the MSA—or when applicable, the metropolitan division (MD; see note 6)—on the grounds that urban residents are likely to cross county lines in their daily activities and also be aware of populations in neighboring counties. However, counties (as opposed to states or census tracts) are similar to MSAs as mid-size containers, and therefore county-level data should produce similar results when incorporated into the analysis. I find in Appendix B.1 that this is indeed the case.

3.3 Segregation and the Visibility of Threat

The results presented thus far have supported my two iterations of the threat hypothesis by positing Black population share and poverty rates as proxies for Whites' awareness of racial diversity or poverty in their metropolitan areas. I now repeat the analysis using measures of segregation by race and income. Using segregation indices based on exposure offers another

approach to operationalizing Whites' awareness of contextual stimuli related to welfare, but with a more literal focus on the visibility of these stimuli from Whites' point of view.

3.3.1 Measuring segregation by race and income

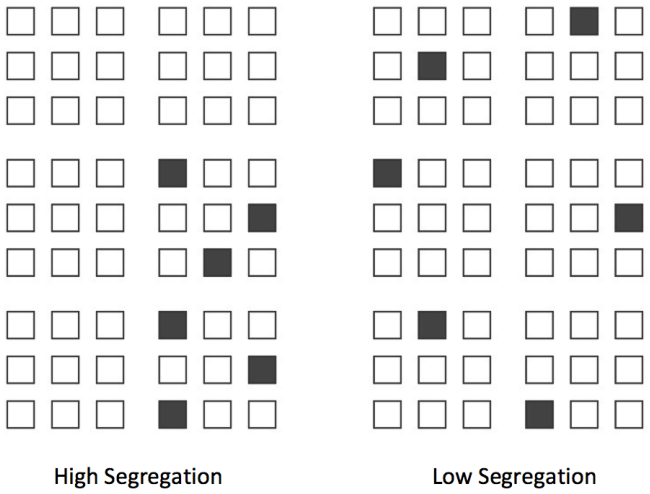
I operationalize racial segregation using the exposure index (X), which includes a measure of White-Black "interaction" in residential settings. This variable reflects the proportion of Black households with which the average White household in an MSA will share a neighborhood, calculated as $\Sigma[(w_i/W) * (b_i/t_i)]$ where w_i, b_i, and t_i represent the White, Black, and total population of each census tract i; and W represents the White population of the larger MSA. The more commonly used component of the exposure index is bXb, reflecting the "isolation" of Blacks from Whites in order to study the deleterious effects of segregation on Blacks. However, White exposure to Blacks is more appropriate for capturing how segregation shapes Whites' experiences of their surroundings.[18] Areas that are *least* segregated by race take on the *highest* values of the exposure index, reaching a maximum where the proportion of Blacks in the average White household's neighborhood is equal to the total proportion of Blacks in the MSA. The exposure index is therefore correlated with Black population share while also adding a new layer of spatial information to my analysis. It is also worth restating that "interaction" in the form of sharing census tracts should not necessarily be understood to reflect interpersonal engagement between Whites and Blacks in such settings. It should, however, reflect the proportion of Whites in an MSA who are likely to encounter Blacks when moving throughout the area.

I operationalize income segregation using an index capturing the percentage of families living in poor neighborhoods, defined as census tracts with median incomes less than two-thirds that of the larger metropolitan area.[19] In a similar fashion to racial segregation and Black population

18. See Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid* for further discussion of the various measures of racial segregation. It is worth noting that my use of the exposure index diverges from the more common use of the dissimilarity index (*D*), which measures the evenness with which a group is spread across an area. One advantage of the dissimilarity index in many applications is that it is not sensitive to the size of a minority population, as the exposure index is. While this makes the dissimilarity index helpful for understanding how segregation affects Black outcomes, in my case, a measure that reflects the underlying size of the Black population is more appropriate, as discussed in the previous chapter, given my effort to capture the visibility of certain populations. Moreover, the exposure index offers distinct values from the perspective of a majority group and from the perspective of a minority group, allowing me to measure the exposure of Whites to Blacks as distinct from the exposure of Blacks to Whites.

19. Kendra Bischoff and Sean F. Reardon, "Residential Segregation by Income, 1970-2009," in *Diversity and Disparities: America Enters a New Century* (New York: The Russell Sage Foundation, 2014), 43.

Figure 3.9: Visualizing Segregation as "Exposure"



This figure is adapted from an illustration used to explain the exposure index of racial segregation in John Iceland, Daniel H. Weinberg, and Erika Steinmetz, *Racial and Ethnic Residential Segregation in the United States: 1980-2000*, technical report (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). However, it is also useful in depicting the basic logic of income segregation when operationalized as the proportion of neighborhoods that have a mix of poor and non-poor households.

share above, this income segregation measure reflects underlying levels of poverty because settings with higher poverty rates will tend to have higher proportions of poor neighborhoods. In order to match the logic of exposure of the non-poor to the poor, I create an inverse version of the economic segregation index. This rescaled variable locates the areas that are *least* segregated by income at the *highest* values of the index, representing settings of greater exposure to the poor.

Figure 3.9 visualizes the logic of the two segregation indices I use, both of which intend to capture segregation from the viewpoint of the majority group (i.e. White households or non-poor households). Whether the shaded squares are said to represent Black households or poor households, the hypothetical MSA on the left has those households clustered in only a few neighborhoods, meaning that the non-shaded households have little exposure to the shaded households. The MSA on the right, on the other hand, is home to the same number of shaded households, but these are more dispersed across the area.

3.3.2 Opposite implications of racial and income segregation

To incorporate these measures, I begin by adding racial segregation to the model controlling for the laziness stereotype. Racial segregation is not significant on its own but interacts with the laziness stereotype in Model 2 of Table 3.4. The significant interaction ($p < 0.01$) indicates that greater exposure of White households to Black households amplifies the effect of racial attitudes on welfare preferences, offering evidence in support of *exposure hypothesis 1*.

Although the interaction in Model 2 resembles the relationship between the laziness stereotype and Black population share, it reveals previously unrecognized differences between MSAs with similar racial makeups but different levels of segregation. For example, the areas surrounding Detroit and Washington, DC had similar Black population shares as of 2000: 23% and 27% Black, respectively. While Detroit's exposure score was 5.59, Washington's was more than twice that at 13.62. If an average White male in the dataset scored at 7 on the Black laziness scale and lived in Detroit, his odds of believing too much is spent on welfare would be 49.5%. If he instead lived in Washington, with a higher chance of sharing a neighborhood with a Black household, those odds would rise to 57.4%. To be sure, Washington and Detroit are different places with different stories; yet, these results are robust to controlling for the region or state in which an MSA is located, and holding constant the individual-level factors that we expect would predict welfare preferences.

In areas with small Black population shares, it is unlikely a White household will share a neighborhood with a Black household no matter how dispersed Black households are. Measuring racial segregation as exposure therefore has the most to add to our understanding of the spatial dynamics of threat in urban areas with substantial Black populations, in keeping with previous findings about segregation's greater relevance to majority group attitudes as the minority presence grows.[20] Nevertheless, the logic of exposure is applicable across the range of Black population share: where a Black population is more *visible*, based on the greater exposure of Whites to Blacks, traditional prejudice will have a greater effect on welfare preferences.

Turning to income segregation, I follow a similar procedure to test *exposure hypothesis 2*. Exposure of the non-poor to poor is not itself predictive of welfare preferences, but it interacts with racial resentment to condition the effect of this racial attitude on welfare preferences. However, the direction of the effect is opposite to that of racial segregation: Model 4 in Table 3.4 indicates

20. Rocha and Espino, "Racial Threat, Residential Segregation, and the Policy Attitudes of Anglos."

Table 3.4: Exposure to Race or Poverty and Opposition to Welfare

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Opposition to Welfare	Laziness Stereotype		Racial Resentment	
Racial Attitudes				
Laziness Stereotype	1.260***	1.036		
	(0.097)	(0.120)		
Racial Resentment			1.227***	1.643***
			(0.075)	(0.252)
Contextual Variables				
Percent Black (log)			0.962	0.988
			(0.110)	(0.105)
Racial Segregation	1.004	0.864**		
	(0.012)	(0.052)		
Poverty Rate	1.000	1.001		
	(0.020)	(0.020)		
Income Segregation			0.916	1.290
			(0.050)	(0.220)
Laziness Stereotype		1.027**		
× Racial Segregation		(0.010)		
Racial Resentment				0.945**
× Income Segregation				(0.024)
Control Variables				
Age	0.992	0.992	0.993	0.994
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Gender	1.283	1.289	1.225	1.142
	(0.245)	(0.247)	(0.291)	(0.278)
Marital Status	1.133	1.131	1.070	1.071
	(0.219)	(0.217)	(0.258)	(0.266)
Education (years)	0.931**	0.931**	0.944	0.951
	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.043)	(0.045)
Income	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Independent	2.113***	2.066***	2.319**	2.436***
	(0.559)	(0.555)	(0.771)	(0.814)
Republican	2.406***	2.436***	1.899**	1.926**
	(0.563)	(0.581)	(0.530)	(0.549)
Constant	0.429	1.236	0.662	0.0942*
	(0.365)	(1.200)	(0.623)	(0.128)
Observations	512	512	361	361
p	0.00000264	1.33e-08	0.000134	0.0000136
Log likelihood	-324.1	-321.8	-223.3	-220.5

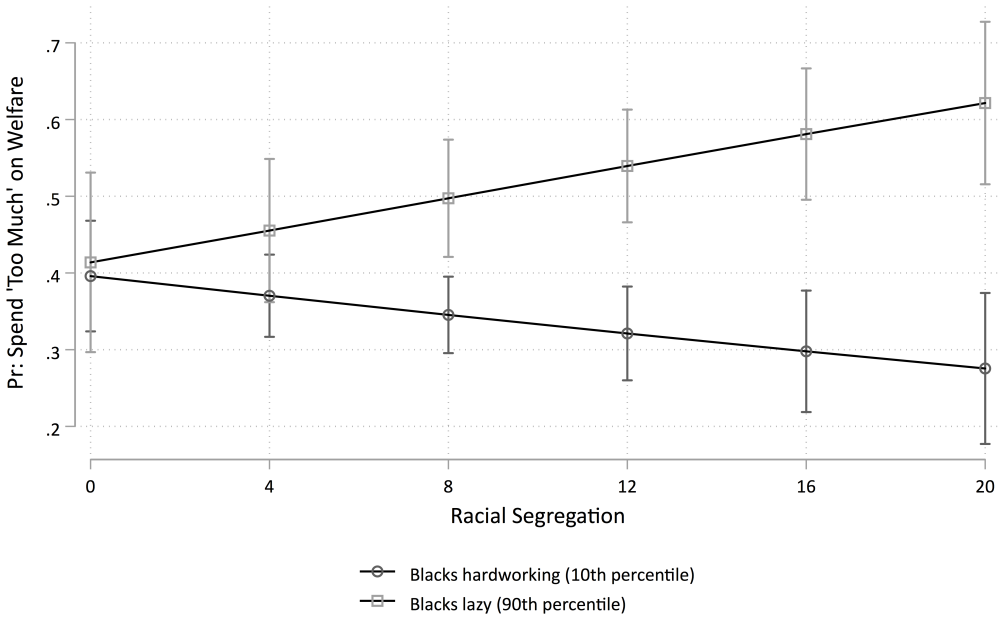
Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

Table reports odds ratios from logistic regression estimating probability of saying too much is spent on welfare; Party base category is Democrat

Source: 2000 General Social Survey

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure 3.10: Effects of Racial Segregation on Expression of Racialized Preferences

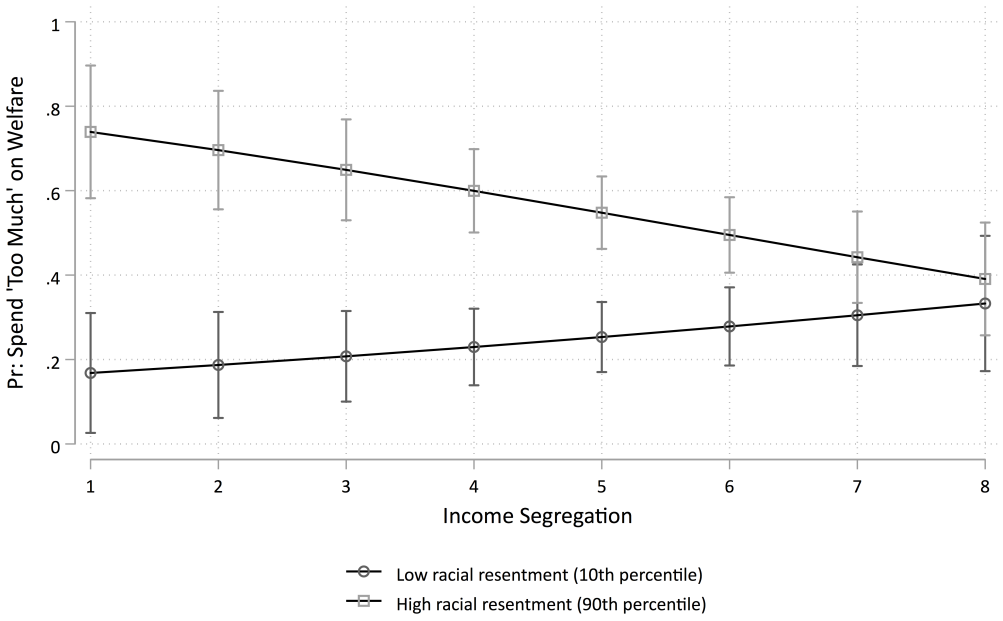


Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 512). Figure visualizes the interaction posed in Model 2 in Table 3.4.

that the effect of racial resentment is weaker where there are more mixed income neighborhoods, or rather, where there is greater exposure of the non-poor to the poor. Consider New York City and Atlanta, cities with poverty rates of 21.2% and 24.4%, respectively, as of 2000. Whereas the proportion of poor tracts in the greater New York area was 0.26, it was 0.13 in the Atlanta area. For the White male described above, were he to score a 7 on the racial resentment scale, his odds of saying too much is spent on welfare would be 59.2% in the New York area. These odds would fall to 45.0% if he lived in the less income-segregated Atlanta area.

Racial and income segregation thus have starkly different effects on the probability that the welfare preferences expressed by Whites in a given setting are influenced by racial attitudes. These counter-directional relationships are illustrated in Figures 3.10 and 3.11. While greater exposure of Whites to Blacks raises the salience of race and consequently amplifies the effect of traditional prejudice on welfare preferences, greater exposure of the non-poor to the poor dampens the effect of racial resentment, as poverty becomes less salient when poor households are dispersed throughout an MSA.

Figure 3.11: Effects of Income Segregation on Expression of Racialized Preferences



Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 361). Figure visualizes the interaction posed in Model 4 in Table 3.4.

These findings not only support my argument that Whites' racial attitudes are more accessible where welfare's racialized image is more visible. They also highlight the subjectivity of the operation of racial threat. Even across MSAs with identical demographics, patterns of segregation could make the stigmas of welfare more or less visible, and Whites' welfare preferences more or less racialized as a result.

3.4 Replication with ANES

My analysis of the 2000 GSS has offered three main insights. First, the strength of the relationship between racial attitudes and welfare preferences is conditioned by local context. Second, whether racial or economic context is relevant depends on the attitude in question—either the Black laziness stereotype or racial resentment. Third, we can theorize racial and economic context as indicative of whether welfare's racialized image is locally visible, due

to either the presence of a Black or poor population, or the distribution of these populations according to residential segregation.

An external test of the robustness of these results comes from the replication of my analysis using contemporaneous data from the 2000 ANES. I locate the 1,393 White respondents to the ANES in their congressional districts as of the 106th Congress. Because congressional districts are apportioned by population, they are more variable in size than MSAs; nonetheless, districts allow me to measure racial and economic demographics at a more local level than states.[21] My variables are similar to those used in my analysis of the GSS. I construct an identical measure of the Black laziness stereotype, scaled between 0 and 10 (M = 5.85, *S.D.* = 1.21). I approximate racial resentment with views on whether Blacks should "work their way up" as other minority groups have, also scaled between 0 and 10 (M = 7.22, *S.D.* = 2.91).[22] Data on Black population share and poverty rates at the congressional district level are drawn from the census. District-level segregation measures reflect weighted averages of the racial and income segregation indices across the MSAs that are partially or fully encompassed by a congressional district.

Table 3.5 reports odds ratios from binary logistic regression, clustering standard errors by district. The previously identified interactions between the laziness stereotype and racial context (Model 1) and between racial resentment and economic context (Model 3) are significant at the 90% confidence level (visualized in Figure 3.12). This borderline significant relationship between attitudes and context is strengthened (p = 0.001) when examining the behavior of the laziness stereotype according to Whites' likelihood of sharing a neighborhood with a Black household (Model 2). The greater significance of the interaction of the laziness stereotype with racial segregation than with Black population share may reflect the influence of gerrymandering, which can produce artificially low- or high-density Black congressional districts whose populations do not reflect that of a larger area. However, the average level of segregation in either the various MSAs located within a large district, or in the larger urban area surrounding a small district, would be less sensitive to gerrymandering. Together, Models 1 and 2 add confidence to the argument that,

21. At the most extreme, congressional districts encompass a whole state. For greater comparability to the GSS, I remove ANES respondents who reside in rural areas (defined as living more than 50 miles from an urban center) as well as those who reside in "at large" districts, which represent entire states.

22. I use this variable for comparability to the GSS, given that the 2000 ANES does not contain the variables necessary to replicate my original factor analysis. The "work way up" question loaded strongly on the racial resentment factor extracted from the GSS data and captures the core sentiment of this racial attitude.

Table 3.5: Racialized Welfare Preferences in Context: ANES Replication

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Opposition to Welfare	Laziness Stereotype		Racial Resentment	
Racial Attitudes				
Laziness Stereotype	0.991	0.888		
	(0.111)	(0.085)		
Racial Resentment			1.069	1.212***
			(0.059)	(0.069)
Contextual Variables				
Percent Black (log)	0.619		1.052	1.078
	(0.217)		(0.075)	(0.076)
Poverty Rate	1.004	1.008	0.959	
	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.034)	
Laziness Stereotype	1.108*			
× Percent Black (log)	(0.066)			
Racial Segregation		0.819***		
		(0.058)		
Laziness Stereotype		1.040***		
× Racial Segregation		(0.012)		
Racial Resentment			1.008*	
× Poverty Rate			(0.005)	
Income Segregation				1.462
				(1.010)
Racial Resentment				0.934
× Income Segregation				(0.084)
Control Variables				
Age	0.994	0.995	0.993	0.994
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Male	0.941	0.961	0.918	0.925
	(0.140)	(0.145)	(0.137)	(0.137)
Marital Status	1.053	1.059	1.052	1.060
	(0.167)	(0.170)	(0.169)	(0.171)
Education	0.949	0.950	1.006	1.008
	(0.047)	(0.048)	(0.051)	(0.051)
Income	1.044*	1.046*	1.034	1.030
	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.026)
Independent	1.270	1.207	1.152	1.120
	(0.267)	(0.255)	(0.243)	(0.237)
Republican	1.777***	1.728***	1.578***	1.549***
	(0.276)	(0.275)	(0.251)	(0.248)
Constant	0.558	0.956	0.290**	0.140***
	(0.433)	(0.679)	(0.167)	(0.083)
Observations	858	852	872	867
Congressional Districts	290	291	288	290
Log likelihood	-556.2	-548.8	-551.8	-549.4

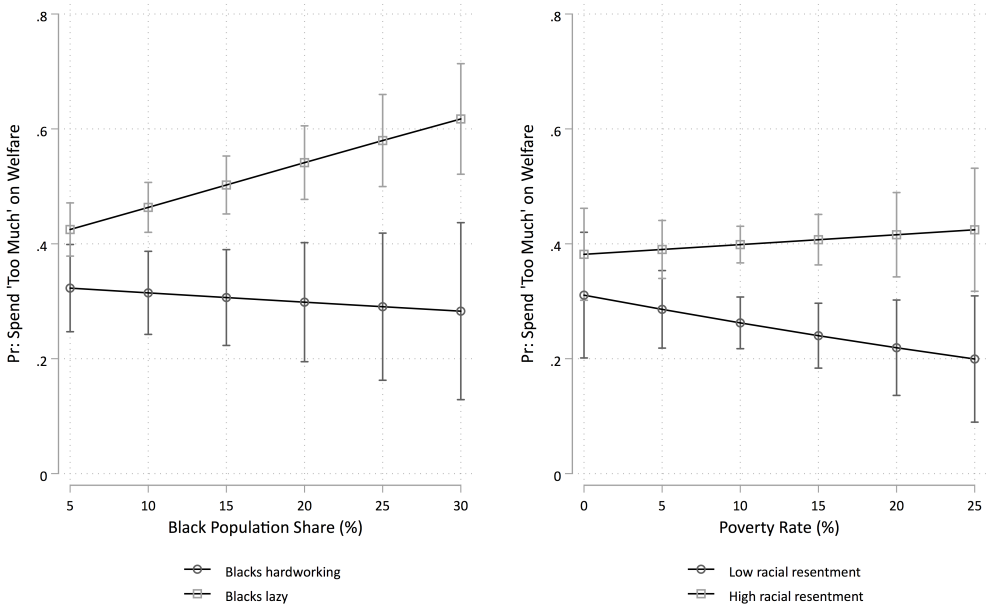
Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

Table reports odds ratios from logistic regression

Source: 2000 American National Election Study

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure 3.12: Polarized Preferences in the ANES: High-Density Black vs. High-Poverty Settings



Source: 2000 American National Election Study. Figure on left visualizes the interaction posed in Model 1 in Table 3.5 (n = 1,015). Figure on right visualizes the interaction posed in Model 2 in Table 3.5 (n = 1,033).

in sub-state geographies where a Black population is more visible, the traditional stereotype of Blacks as lazy is more predictive of opposition to welfare than in settings where race is less salient.

The ANES offers less conclusive evidence in regard to the behavior of racial resentment. Beyond the moderately significant interaction between racial resentment and poverty rate in Model 3, Model 4 does not produce evidence for a significant relationship between racial resentment and income segregation. However, the direction of the relationship matches my findings in the GSS. The greater variation in size of congressional districts than MSAs also likely plays a role in explaining the insignificance of income segregation in the ANES, as well as the reduced significance of poverty rate. Concentrated poverty could be viewed from considerably greater proximity or greater distance, depending on the district. Although further research is needed into the relationship between income segregation and Whites' policy preferences, my findings in the ANES are broadly consistent with my GSS analysis.

3.5 Conclusion to Part I

This chapter has demonstrated not only who is most likely to oppose welfare based on racial prejudice, but also where such prejudices are most likely to be relevant based on the visibility of welfare's racialized policy image. Whites who stereotype Blacks as lazy are likely to express greater opposition to welfare spending in general, but this probability increases in settings where a large Black population raises the salience of race. Racially resentful Whites, on the other hand, become increasingly likely to oppose welfare in settings where high poverty increases the accessibility of beliefs about why Blacks are disproportionately poor.

These findings challenge the common implication in the literature that a proximate Black population *poses* a threat to Whites. By instead theorizing Whites as the *perceivers* of a threat, I reveal specific relationships between different racial attitudes and elements of context, as well as the amplification of both negative and positive orientations toward Blacks.

A further contribution of Part I comes from my analysis of segregation. Operationalizing context with measures of segregation reveals the capacity for demographics associated with welfare to be more or less visible depending on their distribution throughout an MSA. Accordingly, welfare preferences are more likely to be racialized in a setting where a Black or poor population is more visible, even if the underlying size of either population is identical to that in another MSA with different patterns of segregation. This finding highlights that the perception of a threat is influenced not only by racial attitudes, but also by Whites' subjective interpretations of the worlds in which they live.[23]

The analysis presented here has two larger implications for racial politics. First, my analysis questions the reliability of racial attitudes as predictive of policy preferences. Racial attitudes are less reflective of whether someone is "racist" than indicative of how a White individual will evaluate a political issue, especially when the issue's racialized dimensions are salient. This interpretation should not minimize Whites' agency in holding and deploying racially prejudicial views, but rather should serve as a reminder that prejudice may appear irrelevant to politics in some circumstances only to be incited in others. Even if there is scope to frame issues in terms other than racial group competition, my findings highlight the insidious and flexible nature of racial attitudes.

23. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*; Wong et al., "Bringing the Person Back In: Boundaries, Perceptions, and the Measurement of Racial Context."

Second, my analysis of the GSS suggests that the dispersal of lower-income families throughout more affluent neighborhoods would reduce the visibility of poverty as a contextual stimulus related to a racialized understanding of welfare. Although the ANES offers limited support for this conclusion, it comports with the imperative of reducing income segregation in order to improve the life outcomes of the poor. In the case of racial segregation, on the other hand, my analysis indicates that the dispersal of Black families throughout White neighborhoods would not lower the salience of race as a factor influencing the expression of welfare preferences. This finding in no way questions the importance of fighting racial segregation and its harmful effects on Black communities. However, it should serve as a warning against equating residential proximity with positive interracial contact,[24] and more broadly against advocating for racial integration as an end in itself, rather than a strategy to ameliorate racial inequality.[25]

More research is needed to understand how racial and income segregation contextualize Whites' racial policy preferences. Future work should also extend my analysis of welfare preferences following the 1996 reform bill to other racialized policy issues in other periods. Finally, research should move toward considering how the race *and* class of a Black population intersect to influence White attitudes. My analysis suggests that racially resentful Whites react negatively to the salience of poverty, but not necessarily to the salience of race. Part I therefore raises the question of how Whites would respond to affluent Black communities (a question to be explored in Part II of this thesis).

This final point recalls Melissa Harris-Lacewell's critique of the tendency of scholarship on racial attitudes to center Whites and ignore Blacks, particularly downplaying the diversity of Black thought and experience.[26] Although my analysis keeps Whites at the center, I do so in order to interrogate Whites' responsibility as agents of prejudice, rather than victims of racial threat. Thus, Part I makes a recommendation for scholarship on White racial attitudes that should complement Harris-Lacewell's. To understand the persistent influence of Whites' prejudices in politics, we must critically theorize Whites' agency and subjectivity in perceiving the world

24. Laurence, "Reconciling the Contact and Threat Hypotheses: Does Ethnic Diversity Strengthen or Weaken Community Inter-Ethnic Relations?"; See also Enos, "What the Demolition of Public Housing Teaches Us about the Impact of Racial Threat on Political Behavior."

25. Mary Pattillo, "Investing in Poor Black Neighborhoods 'As Is'," in *Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation*, ed. Margery Austin Turner, Susan J. Popkin, and Lynette Rawlings (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press, 2009), 31–46.

26. Harris-Lacewell, "The Heart of the Politics of Race: Centering Black People in the Study of White Racial Attitudes."

through a racialized lens; interpreting Blacks as threatening; and drawing on racial prejudice when forming political preferences.

Part II

Redistributing Privilege: Racial Threat and Opposition to Affirmative Action

Introduction to Part II

Part I offered novel evidence that the extent to which Whites' welfare preferences are racialized varies systematically according to local racial and economic context. My analysis identified previously ignored relationships between attitudes and context. Yet, it was built on a conventional interpretation of the threat hypothesis: the heightened visibility of "welfare"—a racialized reference to poverty assistance that has been construed as a threat to White interests—made Whites in a given metropolitan area more likely to draw on their racial attitudes when expressing views on welfare spending.

At the same time, Part I hinted at possibilities for reimagining the threat hypothesis. In revealing the amplification of racial animus but also affinity—evidenced by the greater support for welfare among racially tolerant Whites when race or poverty was salient—Part I demonstrated the need to go beyond "threat" to better theorize how local geography informs the expression of racialized preferences. In suggesting differences in how traditionally prejudiced as opposed to racially resentful Whites react to middle-class Black neighborhoods, Part I also indicated the need to broaden the typical focus on the Black poor when imagining what Whites would find threatening.

To follow these avenues for further study, I return to Blumer's articulation of four prejudicial feelings that comprise a dominant group's "sense of group position." I distinguish between those feelings concerned with a subordinate outgroup—a belief that the subordinate race is inherently different or alien; and fear or suspicion directed toward the subordinate race—and those concerned with the dominant ingroup —a sense of superiority; and a feeling of entitlement to certain privileges. Although the four are intertwined, Part I drew attention primarily to the negatively valenced, outgroup-oriented feelings of prejudice. Beliefs about Whites' own superiority and entitlement were implicated in debates over welfare, but a greater emphasis was put on implicitly Black welfare recipients as objects of scorn. Part II shifts focus to the positively valenced, ingroup-facing components of Whites' sense of group position in order to show how this dimension of prejudice, too, is responsive to contextual information in Whites' local surroundings. By doing so, Part II not

only extends the findings of Part I but also offers a crucial link to Part III—in which I will show in qualitative detail how Whites' perspectives are shaped by the outgroup- *and* ingroup-oriented feelings that together descend from Whites' privileged position in the racial order.

The investigation that I undertake in Part II challenges the tendency of racial politics scholarship to posit two objectives as complementary ones: one, fighting racial inequality—primarily by raising Blacks' economic and social standing; and two, ameliorating race relations—primarily by reducing anti-Black sentiment among Whites. This is a logical outlook for those of us who see the subordinate position of Blacks as a sociohistorical construction, offering hope for the "reformation" of racial categories as they shape both Blacks' lived experiences and Whites' prejudicial behaviors.[27] For example, the belief that racial animus will be reduced by lifting the status of Blacks appears in scholarship on Whites' perception of low-status Black communities as "threatening," often suggesting that higher-status Blacks would be seen to pose no such threat.[28]

A focus on the absolute economic standing of racial groups also is found on the other side of the coin: lower-status White communities are considered most prone to express prejudicial attitudes,[29] and are most likely to see a proximate Black community as a source of threat.[30] To be sure, the absolute economic status of the races is important in understanding the political behavior of Whites as the group at the top of the racial hierarchy. I propose, however, that we should also pay attention to the *relative* economic status of the races—in objective terms as well as Whites' subjective perceptions of the economic order.

Although a wealth of literature argues that Whites express attitudes and policy preferences that reflect their group's material interests, rarely have scholars also considered how secure Whites perceive those interests to be. I conceptualize security in economic terms, based on the distance Whites see between Blacks and Whites in economic standing. Specifically, I measure how "rich" or "poor" Blacks are perceived to be relative to Whites, based on data from a 2006-2010 GSS panel. I demonstrate that these perceptions may be shaped by traditional stereotypes of Blacks as "lazy," but are independent of racially resentful ideas about where Blacks *ought* to stand in society.

27. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (Routledge, 2014).

28. In the next chapter, I discuss the origins of this idea in the work of William Julius Wilson. See Section 4.3.3.

29. Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (Oxford: Harpers, 1950); Angus Campbell et al., *The American Voter* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960).

30. Oliver and Mendelberg, "Reconsidering the Environmental Determinants of White Racial Attitudes"; Branton and Jones, "Reexamining Racial Attitudes: The Conditional Relationship between Diversity and Socioeconomic Environment."

I take advantage of the GSS panel's setting during the 2007-2009 recession to demonstrate that status perceptions are also informed by local geography. As one might expect, perceptions of Blacks' status relative to Whites are predicted by the true economic standing of the races in a White individual's metropolitan area. Yet, Whites also perceive a smaller status gap between the races in areas where either race is more salient, or where economic insecurity was higher over the course of the recession. Although the belief that Blacks were catching up to Whites in the hardest-hit metropolitan areas is at odds with the severity of the recession's impact on Blacks, this seeming inconsistency reflects the racialized subjectivity of Whites' experience of the world. As a result, Whites respond to local economic insecurity with the justification that Blacks were getting richer as Whites were getting poorer. I reinterpret classic theories of geographic-based group threat to theorize these perceptions as a status threat response when Whites' economic interests appear insecure in a given local context.

I further theorize that status perceptions will predict Whites' racial policy preferences on the grounds that all dominant group members have an interest in defending the social order. I test this assertion in regard to affirmative action in employment: a policy area where Whites must reflect on what Blacks stand to gain as well as what Whites stand to lose when employment opportunities are redistributed.

I find that Whites who think Blacks are close behind in economic standing are more likely to oppose a policy such as affirmative action, whereas Whites who think they have a larger advantage over Blacks are more supportive of affirmative action, holding racial resentment and political ideology constant. Whether this finding is interpreted as Whites feeling "threatened" by the prospect of Blacks catching up economically, or Whites believing affirmative action is less ethically necessary when the status gap is smaller, my analysis reveals a connection between Whites' perceptions of the relative standing of the races and their support for racial policies.

Identifying a potential status threat in no way lessens the imperative of lifting the absolute status of disadvantaged Blacks, either as an end in itself or to mitigate the more typically identified threat lower-status Blacks are believed to pose. However, my analysis suggests that status perceptions pose a second hurdle to Whites' support of racial policies, likely to persist beyond improvements in Blacks' economic position. I find that metropolitan areas where Blacks are higher-status in absolute terms—or those where the stigmas associated with lower-status Black communities are

minimized—are the areas where perceiving a status threat is statistically significant in predicting opposition to affirmative action. Reducing racial inequality may increase perceptions of Blacks as "deserving" beneficiaries, but support for policies targeting those beneficiaries will nonetheless be tempered if Whites feel their economically advantaged position is in danger.

The next chapter situates my study as an investigation not of affirmative action attitudes per se, but of White beliefs about the relative standing of the races, using affirmative action as an illuminative example. I begin by introducing the varied class positions of Black Americans as well as the policy arena of affirmative action. I then detail my conceptualization of status perceptions as distinct from racial resentment before explaining my theorization that status perceptions are shaped by Whites' local geographic contexts, and are predictive of Whites' affirmative action views. In Chapter 5, I discuss my methodology and present the results summarized above. I also test the robustness of my findings, most notably by replicating my analysis using data from the 2016 ANES. This replication study, presented in full in Appendix C, focuses on the perceived political influence of Blacks rather than their perceived economic status; it also examines views on affirmative action in education rather than employment. Yet, the replication provides a second case supporting my argument that the perceived security of Whites' advantaged position in the racial hierarchy is predictive of their racial policy preferences. Part II concludes with a reflection on Whites' proclivity to defend their privileged position, and the conditions under which these defenses might be lowered.

The higher the colored man rises in the scale of society, the less prejudice does he meet.

- Frederick Douglass (1881)
"The Color Line"

4

Affirmative Action, Relative Status, and the Threat of the Black Middle Class

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Frederick Douglass revealed a certain amount of optimism in 1881 when arguing, as discussed in the opening of Chapter 1, that the disassociation of color from "undesirable conditions" would help dismantle the Black-White color line. It was in the same essay that he penned the quote in this chapter's epigraph, reflecting on his own experiences as a Black man who commanded respect in White circles. Douglass captures the intersectional relationship between race and class in determining one's social position.[1]

While sharing Douglass's commitment to appreciating the variety of class identities with

1. The term "intersectionality" typically refers to the intersection of gender and racial identity, particularly as developed by feminist scholars (see Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–1299.) My use of the adjective "intersectional" recognizes the contributions of this research while also respecting that this thesis lacks scope to engage with the additional dimension of gender identity (or sexual identification) that is also at play beneath the dynamics I discuss. While I regret this limitation of scope, I try throughout the thesis to address gender when applicable, and for broader reasons, to recognize the research of women of color whenever possible.

which race intersects, this chapter considers the implications of Black economic improvement in a different light. The drastically different experiences of the Black poor and non-poor should by no means be collapsed, but neither should we minimize the capacity of both to be seen as threatening to Whites' racial group interests.

I begin with a brief survey of class variation in the Black community. I then introduce affirmative action as a policy approach that recognizes this class variation and seeks to address its skew toward poverty, motivated by the historic exclusion of Blacks from employment and educational opportunities. By engaging with the central concepts of racial hierarchy and group position guiding this thesis, the debate over affirmative action provides a valuable background against which to analyze the threat posed to Whites by the prospect of Blacks rising in economic standing.

In the second half of the chapter, I outline a theoretical approach allowing us to identify such a threat. In contrast to the typical focus on the absolute economic status of Blacks, and portrayals of low-income Blacks as "threatening" or "undeserving" (as discussed in Part I), I instead introduce a measure based on Blacks' *relative* status. Specifically, I look at White perceptions of the "gap" between Blacks and Whites in economic status, indicating how secure—or insecure—Whites think their privileged economic position is. I then propose that, irrespective of a White individual's political ideology or racial attitudes, perceiving a threat to White status will make that individual more likely to oppose a policy approach such as affirmative action.

4.1 A Snapshot of the Black Middle Class

Economic and political diversity among Black Americans has long been recognized in research, most notably in the sociological work of Black scholars. Landmark works included W.E.B. Du Bois's 1899 *The Philadelphia Negro*, and St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's study of 1940s Chicago, *Black Metropolis*. These studies offered insight into Black life in Philadelphia and Chicago by illuminating the structural disadvantages constraining Black communities but also the small numbers of Blacks who achieved a middle-class existence within those constraints.[2] There

2. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, 14 (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899); Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis*.

were also more critical takes, such as Franklin Frazier's 1957 *Black Bourgeoisie*, which painted the Black middle class as insular and complacent; this argument was poorly received by many Blacks, but still it was notable in shining light on a small but established high-status part of Black society.[3]

The 1960s and 70s brought a new era of scholarship on Black class diversity, epitomized by the scholarship of William Julius Wilson.[4] Wilson, too, was concerned with class variation among Blacks, writing during an era when Blacks were finally achieving greater representation in middle-class occupations: 10% of Blacks nationwide held middle-class jobs as of 1960, but this grew to 27% by 1970 (for comparison, the statistic was 20% for Whites by 1910).[5] Yet, Wilson's largest contribution was to shine new light on the plight of the Black poor whose neighborhoods slid into decline as better-off Black families "outmigrated" from central cities to suburbs. As Mary Pattillo puts it, middle-income Blacks were important to Wilson's analysis because of their *absence* from poor Black areas, rather than their presence at all.[6]

Other streams of research, including Pattillo's own work, have devoted more attention to the experiences of higher-status Blacks. Research on racial segregation, for example, has questioned how much outmigration has in fact occurred, as well as whether it has brought improved residential outcomes for middle- and upper-income Black households. The verdict here is mixed. While many Blacks have left formerly red-lined neighborhoods, we saw in Chapter 2 that non-poor Blacks still live in neighborhoods drastically different to White households in similar income brackets,[7] serving as one factor behind considerable barriers to social mobility for Blacks.[8] The housing crash of 2006-2007 further had a devastating impact on Black families' small amount of wealth, particularly given

3. E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (Oxford: Simon & Schuster, 1957).

4. William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*.

5. Bart Landry, *The New Black Middle Class* (Univ of California Press, 1987), 2-3.

6. Pattillo, "Black Middle-Class Neighborhoods," 306.

7. As cited in Chapter 2, Reardon, Fox, and Townsend find that the neighborhoods of Black households with incomes of $55,000-60,000 are comparable to those of White households with incomes closer to $12,000. Sharkey produces a similar result, finding the average Black household earning more than $100,000 annually lives in a neighborhood with greater disadvantage and spatial disadvantage than White households earning less than $30,000. See Reardon, Fox, and Townsend, "Neighborhood Income Composition by Household Race and Income, 1990–2009" and Sharkey, "Spatial Segmentation and the Black Middle Class."

8. For more on social mobility among Blacks, see Mazumder, "Black–White Differences in Intergenerational Economic Mobility in the United States" and Richard V. Reeves and Edward Rodrigue, *Five Bleak Facts on Black Opportunity*, technical report (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2015), 1–17, http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/social-mobility-memos/posts/2015/01/15-mlk-black-opportunity-reeves.

the concentration of foreclosures in the most segregated metropolitan areas.[9] And majority-Black neighborhoods are no less likely to be disadvantaged today than they were 40 years ago.[10]

On the other hand, there has been a growing trend of middle-class Black families leaving majority-Black settings and seeking more advantaged, diverse, and suburban settings. The shift has contributed to a considerable decline in the number of middle- and upper-income Black households whose neighborhoods border severely disadvantaged areas—from more than half in 1970 to 27% as of 2009.[11] This distancing from the Black ghetto evidences that higher status Blacks have increasingly established distinct lived experiences from less affluent Blacks.

Another arena in which the mixed progress of middle- and upper-income Blacks manifests itself is in this group's negotiation between racial and class identities. Studies such as Pattillo's *Black on the Block* have revealed the resulting tensions: with racial pride on the one hand, and a desire to have the experiences that should be afforded to any middle class American on the other hand.[12] Scholarship in this area generally emphasizes the "inbetweenness" of the Black middle class experience, as well as the performance of high-status lifestyles in an effort to distinguish oneself from particular stereotypes of the Black community.[13] Another central theme is the inescapability of racism even as Blacks rise in status, with more recent studies contradicting Douglass's argument that higher status Blacks will necessarily be met with less prejudice.[14]

Less nuanced thought, however, has been given to how middle- and upper-income Blacks are perceived by Whites—or, more specifically, what significance their presence has for Whites' engagement with racial politics. One likely reason for this omission is the powerful association that has been drawn between Blackness and poverty, as discussed in Chapter 2: images of affluent Blacks fade into the distance in comparison to the negatively-framed images of lower-income

9. Jacob S. Rugh and Douglas S. Massey, "Racial Segregation and the American Foreclosure Crisis," *American Sociological Review* 75, no. 5 (2010): 629–651.

10. See Sharkey, "Spatial Segmentation and the Black Middle Class." Sharkey uses a compound measure of advantage/disadvantage, measuring welfare receipt, poverty and unemployment rates, the share of female-headed households, and the share of residents under 18 in a given census tract.

11. Ibid., 930.

12. Mary Pattillo, *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

13. See Pattillo, *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril among the Black Middle Class*; Bruce D. Haynes, *Red Lines, Black Spaces: The Politics of Race and Space in a Middle-Class Black Suburb*, New Haven, 2001; John L. Jackson, *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Monique M. Taylor, *Harlem: Between Heaven and Hell* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); and Maria Kefalas, *Working-Class Heroes: Protecting Home, Community, and Nation in a Chicago Neighborhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

14. Joe R. Feagin and Melvin P. Sikes, *Living with Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience* (Beacon Press, 1994).

Blacks that dominate media depictions and political narratives in the present day.[15] When the scholarship on White animus toward Blacks has a tendency of ignoring Blacks themselves, it is unsurprising that few scholars have engaged with questions about the particular racialization of—by which I mean the racial meanings associated with—middle- and upper-income Blacks.[16]

There are exceptions to this, such as the 90s-era debate about reactions to the popularized Huxtable family on NBC's *The Cosby Show*. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. argued at the time that the show's focus on "the miniscule integration of blacks into the upper middle class [...] reassuringly throws the blame for black poverty back onto the impoverished."[17] Subsequent research by Sut Jhally and John Lewis offered support for Gates's critique, finding that while White viewers recognized the Huxtables as atypical, Whites also cited the Huxtables as evidence that Blacks had equal opportunities in America, and that race-targeting or other initiatives to fight discrimination were unnecessary.[18] These arguments inform my analysis, but there remains great scope to consider reactions to higher-status Blacks as revealing of how Whites feel about their own position in relation to Blacks, and thus reflective of the psychology of threat.

Therefore, in this chapter I shift attention away from Part I's focus on the much-stigmatized Black poor and recognize the extreme inequality that exists not just between Blacks and Whites, but also *within* the Black community.[19] The analysis I present in Part II is by no means comprehensive in explaining how Whites see and respond to Blacks higher up the class spectrum; this area of research is ripe for further study. I offer one approach, however, to investigating how Whites react to the prospect of Blacks catching up economically.

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15. Examples more recent than Gilens's oft-cited study include racialized coverage of Hurricane Katrina (see Samuel R. Sommers et al., "Race and Media Coverage of Hurricane Katrina: Analysis, Implications, and Future Research Questions," *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 6, no. 1 (2006): 39–55), and the associations between Black Americans and "inner cities" and "war zones" during the 2016 presidential election (see news coverage such as Richard Fausset, Alan Blinder, and John Eligon, "Donald Trump's Description of Black America Is Offending Those Living in It," *New York Times*, August 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/us/politics/donald-trump-black-voters.html).

16. See the critique of research on White racial attitudes for its tendency to ignore Blacks made by Harris-Lacewell, "The Heart of the Politics of Race: Centering Black People in the Study of White Racial Attitudes."

17. Henry Louis Gates Jr., "TV's Black World Turns—But Stays Unreal," *New York Times*, November 1989, http://www.nytimes.com/1989/11/12/arts/tv-s-black-world-turns-but-stays-unreal.html.

18. Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis, *Enlightened Racism* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992); See also John Lewis and Sut Jhally, "Affirming Inaction: Television and the New Politics of Race," in *Marxism in the Postmodern Age: Confronting the New World Order*, ed. Stephen Cullenberg, Carole Biewener, and Antonio Callari (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), 133–141.

19. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, Income Gini Ratio for Households by Race of Householder, Black Alone, retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GINIBAF, September 27, 2017.

How likely is this prospect? Table 4.1 offers a snapshot of class variation among Blacks as compared to Whites, with a focus on education, income, and occupation. I offer this comparison rather than draw strict boundaries to define the "Black middle class" as opposed to either the Black poor or the White middle class. My approach recognizes that the delineation of classes is a major debate in sociological literature that I lack the scope to fully address here, but emphasizes factors that contribute to economic inequality between Blacks and Whites, and between higher- and lower-income Blacks. An approach that highlights variation rather than demarcating the Black middle class also nods to Pattillo's suggestion that we concern ourselves with "non-poor" Blacks rather than "middle-class" ones—given that research on the Black middle class has encompassed everything from "terminal high school graduates as well as those with incomes over $75,000 per year."[20]

Table 4.1: Economic Characteristics of Black and White Americans

	Blacks		**Whites**	
Education (Population 25 years and over)	24,689,835		141,456,683	
Less than high school diploma	4,011,131	**16%**	11,658,364	**8%**
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	7,706,567	31%	40,105,120	28%
Some college or associate's degree	8,159,922	33%	42,697,018	30%
Bachelor's degree or higher	4,812,215	**19%**	46,996,181	**33%**
Income (Households)	14,186,983		80,971,346	
Less than $15,000	3,255,921	**23%**	8,278,819	**10%**
$15,000 to $29,999	2,872,160	20%	11,532,812	14%
$30,000 to $49,999	2,845,911	20%	14,480,155	18%
$50,000 to $99,999	3,485,539	25%	25,315,688	31%
$100,000 or more	1,727,452	**12%**	21,363,872	**26%**
Occupation (Civilian employed 16 years and over):	16,147,976		95,436,697	
Management, business, science, and arts	4,602,135	**28%**	39,118,842	**41%**
Service	4,105,756	25%	14,290,551	15%
Sales and office	4,126,114	26%	23,492,037	25%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	841,740	5%	8,178,399	9%
Production, transportation, and material moving	2,472,231	15%	10,356,868	11%

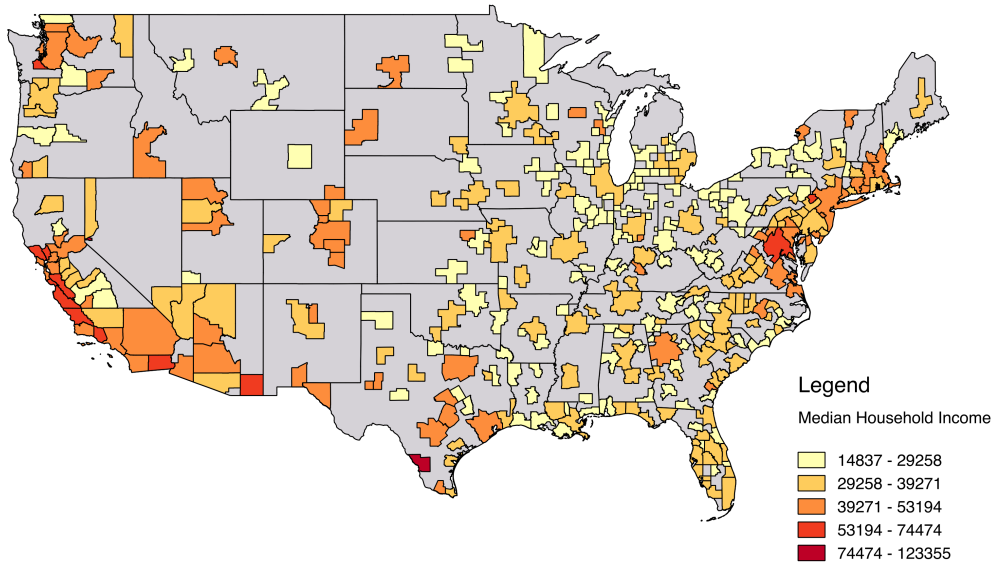
Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Sex by Educational Attainment (C15002H/B); Household Income in the Past 12 Months (2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars (B19001H/B); Sex by Occupation for the Civilian Employed Population (C24010H/B). Emphasis added to highlight disparities.

The table demonstrates the disparities between the economic circumstances of Blacks and Whites. The bolded figures in the table emphasize that these disparities are particularly stark at the extremes—for example, when comparing the attainment of high school diplomas and

20. Pattillo, "Black Middle-Class Neighborhoods," 307.

bachelor's degrees for each racial group. At the same time, the table reveals how much is obscured when debates focus only on the Black poor, or otherwise collapse variation in Blacks' economic circumstances. In conjunction, Figure 4.1 visualizes how the median incomes of Black households vary across metropolitan areas. The interplay between context and attitudes identified in Part I suggests that such geographic variation will be a factor shaping White opinion.

Figure 4.1: Median Incomes of Urban Black Households, 2015



Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Household Income in the Past 12 Months (2015 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) (B19013B); map includes all Micropolitan and Metropolitan Statistical Areas.

The extent to which the presence of middle- and upper-income Blacks today is a product of affirmative action policies is not clear. Multi-fold increases in the number of Black professionals during the post-Civil Rights era almost certainly were aided by changing practices for the admission of Blacks to higher education; a similar point could be made about hiring practices. At the same time, research has attributed most of the economic gains made by Blacks between the 1960s and 1980s to antidiscrimination laws, increased returns from education (particularly in the South), and the migration of Blacks to urban centers in Northern cities—rather than to race-

conscious hiring or admission practices.[21]

In any case, affirmative action has long been a contentious issue in American politics, and has included Blacks across the economic spectrum in its race-targeting. The next section directs our attention to the debate over affirmative action: not only as a policy approach whose beneficiaries include the middle- and upper-income Blacks described above, but also as a topic that probes the security of Whites' own place in the racial hierarchy.

4.2 Affirmative Action and the Defense of White Interests

Affirmative action is the paradigm behind policies that aim to counter discrimination proactively rather than reactively. Its goals are to increase the representation of minorities through structural change (rather than fighting individual instances of racism or bigotry), and to challenge the implicit Whiteness of traditional definitions of "merit."[22] In the decades since its creation, affirmative action has provoked heated debate in both the public sphere and the scholarly one.

As John Skrentny tells it, affirmative action presents two ironies.[23] The first concerns affirmative action's origins, given that it came about in the face of much public criticism and little organized support. As of the 1960s, mainstream civil rights groups tended to advocate for colorblindness over race preferences. Even the Congress of Racial Equality was hesitant to stand too strongly behind its advocacy for the proportional hiring of Black candidates, being sensitive to the taboo nature of the topic of racial quotas. Similar hesitance is evident in the colorblind language of Section VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited employers from discriminating on the basis of "race, color, religion, sex, or national origin."[24]

21. On the limited impact that can be attributed to affirmative action policies, see James J. Heckman and Brook S. Payner, "Determining the Impact of Federal Antidiscrimination Policy on the Economic Status of Blacks: A Study of South Carolina," *The American Economic Review* 79, no. 1 (1989): 138–177 and John J. Donohue III and James Heckman, "Continuous Versus Episodic Change: The Impact of Civil Rights Policy on the Economic Status of Blacks" (1991). Another discussion of Black progress as of the 1990s comes from Abigail Thernstrom and Stephan Thernstrom, "Black Progress: How Far We've Come—And How Far We Have to Go," *The Brookings Review* 16, no. 2 (1998): 12.

22. John David Skrentny, *The Ironies of Affirmative Action: Politics, Culture, and Justice in America* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 7-8.

23. Ibid.

24. Section VII also created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to enforce this requirement, though the EEOC was initially granted few powers to do so. See King, *Separate and Unequal: Black Americans and the US Federal Government*, pg. 206-210 for a discussion of the EEOC, as well as how the challenges of regulating employers' respect of Section VII were articulated by early leaders of efforts to enforce the law.

The more assertive idea of taking affirmative action to recruit Blacks emerged from an executive order by John F. Kennedy in 1961, and was reinforced by another order from Lyndon Johnson in 1965. Skrentny argues both orders were a "crisis management" strategy by the White House, seeking both to address racial unrest at home and to maintain American legitimacy abroad, particularly amidst growing concerns about human rights during the Cold War era.[25] Richard Nixon's support of affirmative action can be seen as similarly pragmatic: it helped split his opposition by pitting labor interests and civil rights advocates against each other.[26] Tepid support from the courts ultimately helped make a controversial policy publically acceptable, even if still hotly contested.

The second irony Skrentny identifies in relation to affirmative action merits more critical consideration. Skrenty astutely observes that race preferences garner remarkable opposition given that American society is "rife with exceptions to difference blindness."[27] "Ironic" is arguably an inappropriate description, however, for the fact that special considerations for Blacks have been less popular than considerations for veterans or other groups. As Kate Greene has pointed out, far from a seeming contradiction, this is simply "the logical progression of our racism."[28] A more appropriate irony to identify in regard to affirmative action is one suggested by Desmond King. It has become a commonplace critique, particularly from the right, to argue that using federal action to counter racial inequality "is inherently flawed and doomed to fail."[29] But, as King argues, not only was federal action a major *cause* of this inequality, but federal action has also been crucial in making the amends that have been achieved. In either case, the federal government has long had a role in shaping the material outcomes of Black Americans.

This latter irony continues to shape present-day debates over affirmative action—which, as Jennifer Hochshild predicted would be the case, faces the greatest danger of being dismantled in the courts (rather than at the ballot box) by ideologically driven litigators who are waging a strategic anti-affirmative action campaign.[30] Although the approach has come under fire in both

25. Skrentny, *The Ironies of Affirmative Action: Politics, Culture, and Justice in America*, 76.

26. A detailed account of clashes within labor over racial issues is found in Paul Frymer, *Black and Blue: African Americans, the Labor Movement, and the Decline of the Democratic Party* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008).

27. Skrentny, *The Ironies of Affirmative Action: Politics, Culture, and Justice in America*, 3.

28. Kate Greene, "Review of The Ironies of Affirmative Action: Politics, Culture, and Justice in America, by John David Skrentny," *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 1 (1997): 197–199.

29. King, *Separate and Unequal: Black Americans and the US Federal Government*.

30. Jennifer L. Hochschild, "The Strange Career of Affirmative Action," *Ohio State Law Journal* 59, no. 3 (1998): 997–1037.

employment and education,[31] the latter has received more negative attention over the last few decades, as well as in recent years thanks to cases such as *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013).[32] My main focus, however, is on affirmative action in employment.[33] This realm has been somewhat less contentious, perhaps because it is easier to identify the positive effect affirmative action has had on corporate profits than on educational outcomes.[34] At the same time, hiring practices affect a much larger number of Americans than do university admissions processes.

Whether considering education or employment, one thing is clear: affirmative action for Blacks has consistently been viewed less favorably by Whites than initiatives targeting other groups (e.g. women), across a range of policy design and survey question wording.[35] One example of such a finding comes from Lawrence Bobo and James Kluegel, who demonstrate that Whites' approval of affirmative action decreases when a policy's targeting of Blacks becomes explicit. However, these authors also note that Whites' approval *increases* when a policy is designed to emphasize equal opportunities rather than equal outcomes. Bobo and Kluegel's two findings thus highlight one of the earliest points of contention in the debate over how to understand views on affirmative action: is opposition to affirmative action the product of negative feelings toward Blacks, or beliefs about the justifiability of group-based preferences? This debate is well worn, but I review it here to lay the groundwork for a discussion of racial policy preferences as operating in defense of Whites' group interests.

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31. See Ricci v. DeStefano (2009) for an example of a recent high-profile case over affirmative action in employment.

32. Abigail Fisher claimed that the University of Texas's use of race as a factor in admissions decisions violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Although the Supreme Court sent the case back to a lower court in 2013, in 2016 an appellate court held that the university's considering of race was sufficiently narrowly defined for the specific interest of promoting diversity, and therefore was constitutional.

33. The GSS panel surveys views about affirmative action in education only, rather than in education, which informs my primary focus in Part II. The 2016 ANES, on the other hand, asks about affirmative action only in employment, which features in my replication analysis as reported in Appendix C.

34. On the impact of affirmative action in the workplace, see studies such as Wilma Randle, "Corporate Conscience Linked To Profitability," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago), May 1993, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1993-05-25/business/9305250047_1_socially-financial-returns-mid-size-firms or Larry Bellinger and Amy J. Hillman, "Does Tolerance Lead to Better Partnering? The Relationship Between Diversity Management and M&A Success," *Business & Society* 39, no. 3 (2000): 323–337. On the impact of affirmative action in education, however, see William G. Bowen and Derek Bok, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 544.

35. For a review, see Faye J. Crosby, Aarti Iyer, and Sirinda Sincharoen, "Understanding Affirmative Action," *Annual Review of Psychology* 57 (2006): 585–611.

4.2.1 Understanding White opposition to affirmative action

Some of the earliest approaches to conceptualizing opposition to affirmative action come from the racial attitudes literature that was emerging at the same time as affirmative action policies were taking shape in the 1970s and 80s. This approach was led by scholars such as Donald Kinder and David Sears, introduced in Chapter 2, who proposed that a new, "symbolic" form of racism had emerged in the post-Jim Crow era.[36] Kinder and Sears initially conceptualized opposition to affirmative action as itself a component of symbolic racism. This was justly criticized as a circular definition, given that symbolic racism was meant to *predict* opposition to affirmative action and other race-targeted policies. Since then, however, a large body of research has identified anti-Black affect as at least one major predictor of opposition to affirmative action.[37]

A different approach comes from scholars who argue that the influence of racial animus on affirmative action views has been overstated, instead proposing that White opposition is based on principles that are fundamentally race-neutral. Seymour Lipset, for example, argues that Americans' commitment to meritocracy leads them to reject the idea of race-based quotas.[38] Another popular version of this argument is the "principled conservatism" hypothesis, which holds that race-targeting presents reasons for White opposition on grounds that cannot be dismissed as prejudice.[39] The principled conservatism hypothesis as applied to affirmative action differs from its application to welfare in Part I: with an explicitly race-targeted approach like affirmative action, Sniderman is more sympathetic to arguments that some degree of negative racial affect

36. David O. Sears and Donald R. Kinder, "Racial Tension and Voting in Los Angeles," in *Los Angeles: Viability and Prospects for Metropolitan Leadership*, ed. Werner Z. Hirsch (New York: Praeger, 1971); John B. McConahay and Joseph C. Hough, "Symbolic Racism," *Journal of Social Issues* 32, no. 2 (1976): 23–45; Kinder and Sears, "Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism Versus Racial Threats to the Good Life."

37. Bobo and Kluegel, "Opposition to Race-Targeting: Self-Interest, Stratification Ideology, or Racial Attitudes?"; Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo, "Racism, Conservatism, Affirmative Action, and Intellectual Sophistication: A Matter of Principled Conservatism or Group Dominance?"; David O. Sears et al., "Is It Really Racism? The Origins of White Americans' Opposition to Race-Targeted Policies," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (1997): 16–53; Lawrence Bobo, "Race, Interests, and Beliefs about Affirmative Action: Unanswered Questions and New Directions," *American Behavioral Scientist* 41, no. 7 (1998): 985–1003; D. Ramona Bobocel et al., "Justice-based Opposition to Social Policies: Is It Genuine?," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75, no. 3 (1998): 653; Edward G. Carmines and Geoffrey C. Layman, "When Prejudice Matters: The Impact of Racial Stereotypes on the Racial Policy Preferences of Democrats and Republicans," chap. 4 in *Perception and Prejudice: Race and Politics in the United States*, ed. Mark Peffley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 100–134; Mark Peffley and Jon Hurwitz, "Whites' Stereotypes of Blacks: Sources and Political Consequences," *Perception and Prejudice: Race and Politics in the United States*, 1998, 58–99; Strolovitch, "Playing Favorites: Public Attitudes Toward Race- and Gender-Targeted Anti-Discrimination Policy."

38. Seymour Martin Lipset, "Affirmative Action and the American Creed," *The Wilson Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1992): 52–62.

39. Paul M. Sniderman, Philip E. Tetlock, and Thomas Piazza, *National Race and Politics Survey*, Survey Research Center, University of California, Berkeley, 1991.

is behind White opposition. Yet, the principled conservatism school maintains that opposition to affirmative action is not simply a continuation of old racial prejudices and fears, but rather "significantly departs from racial politics of the past."[40]

Several studies challenge the logic of principled conservatism by presenting empirical findings that contradict its claims, such as noting instances in which prejudice blinds people to whether or not a policy violates their stated principles of justice,[41] or identifying a double standard by which beliefs about egalitarianism are more predictive of opposition to race-targeted policies than gender-targeted policies.[42] In response, Sniderman and co-authors have argued that such inconsistencies in the principled conservatism hypothesis tend to occur primarily among politically unsophisticated Whites.[43] Politically sophisticated Whites are considered better able to draw upon their personal ideologies to inform their policy preferences.[44]

Affirmative action, however, stands out among racial policies as one that even politically sophisticated Whites broadly oppose.[45] This finding has informed a third approach to explaining opposition to affirmative action on the grounds that education makes Whites more adept in the "ideological refinement" of their policy preferences to defend their privileges.[46] Studies by Jim Sidanius and co-authors find that, while political ideology is indeed a stronger predictor of affirmative action preferences among sophisticated Whites, conservatism is also more correlated with negative racial affect among this group.[47] These authors thus agree with the principled conservatism school's premise that sophisticated Whites oppose affirmative action on ideological grounds—but they see

40. James H. Kuklinski et al., "Racial Prejudice and Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action," *American Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 2 (1997): 403.

41. Bobocel et al., "Justice-based Opposition to Social Policies: Is It Genuine?"

42. Strolovitch, "Playing Favorites: Public Attitudes Toward Race- and Gender-Targeted Anti-Discrimination Policy."

43. Paul M. Sniderman, Richard A. Brody, and Phillip E. Tetlock, *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

44. There is disagreement over the best way to conceptualize political sophistication: many studies use a measure of educational status, but others argue that political knowledge is a more appropriate predictor of engagement in politics and ideological constraint. For my purposes, it is sufficient to conceptualize sophistication as the product of either education or political knowledge, in either case giving elite members of a dominant group an advantage in justifying opposition to policies that would help the subordinate group.

45. Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America: Trends and Interpretations*.

46. Mary R. Jackman, "General and Applied Tolerance: Does Education Increase Commitment to Racial Integration?," *American Journal of Political Science* 22, no. 2 (1978): 302–324; Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo, "Racism, Conservatism, Affirmative Action, and Intellectual Sophistication: A Matter of Principled Conservatism or Group Dominance?"; Glaser, "The Preference Puzzle: Educational Differences in Racial-Political Attitudes."

47. Christopher M. Federico and Jim Sidanius, "Racism, Ideology, and Affirmative Action Revisited: The Antecedents and Consequences of 'Principled Objections' to Affirmative Action," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82, no. 4 (2002): 488; Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo, "Racism, Conservatism, Affirmative Action, and Intellectual Sophistication: A Matter of Principled Conservatism or Group Dominance?"

ideology as a tool equipping Whites to explain their racial policy preferences via arguments that defend "group superiority in terms that appear both morally and intellectually justifiable."[48]

Sidanius and co-authors locate the ideological refinement hypothesis within social dominance theory, which sees intergroup relations as fundamentally shaped by the desire of dominant groups to maintain unequal social hierarchies. This approach to understanding racial policy preferences fits into the tradition of group-based theories of prejudice introduced in Chapter 1 Section 1.1.1. The specific relevance of these approaches to affirmative action is perhaps best articulated by Bobo: "Whites," he argues, "will oppose affirmative action, not so much because they see a race-based policy as contravening their highest values or because they have learned a new, politically relevant set of resentments of Blacks, but rather because they perceive Blacks as competitive threats for valued social resources, status, and privileges."[49] In this statement, Bobo answers the question I posed above: neither negative affect nor beliefs about group-based preferences explain opposition to affirmative action as much as Whites' protectiveness of their own group interests.

4.2.2 The relevance of affirmative action to the present study

My analysis builds on Bobo's point. In focusing on affirmative action, it is not my aim to adjudicate on the influence of racial bias as opposed to race-neutral orientations on affirmative action preferences. Most scholars agree that both have some influence (indeed, the ideological refinement hypothesis sees the two as related). Neither is it my aim to offer an explanation that supplants any of these as a primary explanation of variation in Whites' affirmative action views,

48. Sidanius, Pratto, and Bobo, "Racism, Conservatism, Affirmative Action, and Intellectual Sophistication: A Matter of Principled Conservatism or Group Dominance?," 477; see also Geoffrey T. Wodtke, "Are Smart People Less Racist? Verbal Ability, Anti-Black Prejudice, and the Principle-Policy Paradox," *Social Problems* 63, no. 1 (2016): 21–45.

49. Lawrence Bobo, "Mapping Racial Attitudes at the Century's End: Has the Color Line Vanished or Merely Reconfigured," *Aspen Roundtable Project on Race and Community Revitalization*, 1998, 989.

especially given the stickiness of White opposition.[50] Rather, affirmative action offers an ideal background against which to discuss the relevance of White concerns about the security of their status over Blacks, adding several new dimensions to Part I's analysis of welfare preferences.

The first is the most obvious: while welfare is a policy implicitly associated with race, affirmative action for Blacks makes explicit who its intended beneficiaries are. Second, affirmative action is targeted not only at poor Blacks, but also at Blacks further up the class ladder. Thus, it expands the typical focus on a threat posed by the "undeserving" Black poor to consider a potential threat posed by the middle- and upper-income Blacks described in the previous section. Third, in addressing the historically privileged access Whites have enjoyed to employment, affirmative action also requires reflection not only on Blacks as beneficiaries, but also on Whites' position in the racial hierarchy. More so than welfare, affirmative action prompts Whites to "think about their own racial identity in relational terms" and reflect on what they stand to lose from granting more opportunities to Blacks.[51] Together, these features offer an opportunity to further develop the theory presented in Part I through the analysis of affirmative action as a policy that inspires reflection on the race *and* class of beneficiaries, as well as the security of Whites' own standing in the social order.

The fact that debate about affirmative action is often "more symbolic than substantive," as Jennifer Hochschild suggests, ultimately lends the topic to a study concerned with subjective perceptions of racial policies.[52] Even though White opinion on affirmative action may be reliably negative, it would be striking to find that these views are nonetheless influenced at the margin by Whites' perceptions of a threat to their economic position, and that opposition to affirmative action is moderated when Whites feel their position is secure.

50. Hochschild has argued that public opinion on affirmative action may not be as impassioned or polarized as the scholarly debate makes it seem. She cites examples such as Democratic opposition to affirmative action, broad support for reforming rather than ending affirmative action policies, and even the fact that a large number of Whites have no associations with affirmative action at all. Hochschild, "The Strange Career of Affirmative Action"; see also Charlotte Steeh and Maria Krysan, "Trends: Affirmative Action and the Public, 1970-1995," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (1996): 128–158. While these insights are valuable for a deeper understanding of public opinion on affirmative action, a wealth of survey data nonetheless suggests that affirmative action is, on the whole, unpopular among Whites. Even if they are sensitive to question wording that deemphasizes race or emphasizes equal outcomes, Whites have been found to be more committed to their views on affirmative action than other racial policies, even when they are asked follow-up questions seeking to change their minds. See Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock, *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology*, 145.

51. Charles A. Gallagher, "Transforming Racial Identity Through Affirmative Action," in *Race and Ethnicity: Across Time, Space, and Discipline*, ed. Rodney D. Coates, September (Brill Publishers, 2004), 154.

52. Jennifer L. Hochschild, "Affirmative Action as Culture War," in *The Cultural Territories of Race: Black and White Boundaries*, ed. Michèle Lamont (University of Chicago Press / Russell Sage Foundation, 1999), 1–33.

4.3 Theorizing a Status Threat

The key concept motivating Part II is Whites' perceived security of their dominant position over Blacks. In this section, I theorize this evaluation as (a) distinct from a normative evaluation of where the races ought to rank in society; (b) responsive to the racial and economic demographics of Whites' local surroundings; and (c) politically relevant through its influence on Whites' affirmative action preferences.

4.3.1 White perceptions of the social order

The relative positioning of the races is a foundational concern in group-based approaches to studying racial politics. As we have seen throughout Chapters 1-3, Whites' interest in maintaining their dominant position offers a compelling explanation for behavior in a variety of circumstances—including when White individuals oppose racial policies that do not directly impact them but still threaten Whites' "way of life,"[53] or when justifications for such opposition are couched as non-racial, "principled" objections.[54] We also know that research in this area generally agrees that, because dominant groups have a natural instinct to maintain a social order that places them at the top, animus toward Blacks is unnecessary for Whites to act in a manner that defends their interests.[55]

Little consideration, however, has been given to how secure Whites believe their interests to be. I focus on Whites' economic interests in particular. Although Whites' dominant position does not stem from economic privilege alone, economic status is closely aligned with political power and social standing, and offers an intuitive way of ranking groups in a social order. Literature from psychology and economics further indicates that individuals are sensitive to relative economic standing, especially rank in an income distribution, when evaluating our wellbeing.[56] Similar

53. Bobo, "Whites' Opposition to Busing: Symbolic Racism or Realistic Group Conflict?"

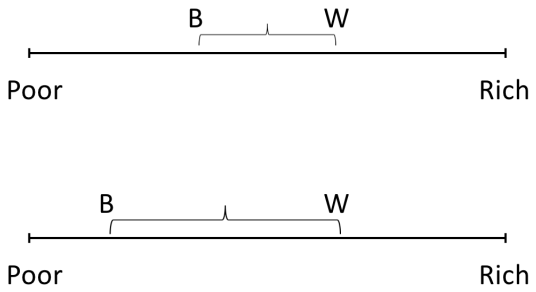
54. Federico and Sidanius, "Racism, Ideology, and Affirmative Action Revisited: The Antecedents and Consequences of 'Principled Objections' to Affirmative Action."

55. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*.

56. Erzo F. P. Luttmer, "Neighbors as Negatives: Relative Earnings and Well-Being," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120, no. 3 (2005): 963–1002; Christopher J. Boyce, Gordon D. A. Brown, and Simon C. Moore, "Money and Happiness: Rank of Income, Not Income, Affects Life Satisfaction," *Psychological Science* 21, no. 4 (2010): 471–475; Ilyana Kuziemko et al., "'Last-Place Aversion:' Evidence and Redistributive Implications," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129, no. 1 (2014): 105–149.

dynamics should operate at the level of the group, given that economic assessments are known to be more sensitive to "sociotropic," or group-level, considerations than to one's own economic standing.[57] These insights motivate my focus on White perceptions of the economic status of the races in relative terms—operationalized as evaluations of whether Blacks tend to be "rich" or "poor," relative to Whites. I argue that these evaluations reflect the perceived *security* of White status by capturing the distance Whites see between themselves and Blacks on the economic ladder, and thus the prospect of Blacks challenging Whites' dominant position.

Figure 4.2: Visualizing a Status Threat



In the top image, Blacks are perceived to be relatively richer, indicating a smaller status gap, and thus lesser security of Whites' position. In the bottom image, Blacks are perceived to be relatively poorer, indicating a larger status gap, and thus greater security of Whites' status.

Figure 4.2 visualizes how perceiving Blacks to be relatively richer produces a smaller gap between Blacks and Whites on the scale than if Blacks are perceived to be relatively poorer. The top image in the figure depicts a scenario in which Whites' position would be considered less secure, due to Blacks ranking closer to Whites in economic standing.

A potential challenge to my argument that perceptions of the "status gap" between Blacks and Whites reflect the perceived security of Whites' position concerns the possible influence of racial animus. Is it simply that racially hostile Whites are likely to think Blacks are poor (as well as lazy, violent, or in possession of other negative traits associated with racial stereotypes)? My response to this question takes us back to the distinction between different forms of racial animus as introduced in Part I—specifically, the traditional stereotype of Blacks as lazy, as opposed to the more nuanced view of racial resentment. These two racial attitudes are again illuminative for my analysis in Part II.

57. Donald R. Kinder and D. Roderick Kiewiet, "Sociotropic Politics: The American Case," *British Journal of Political Science* 11, no. 2 (1981): 129–161.

On the one hand, it is likely that endorsing traditional stereotypes will lead a White individual to evaluate Blacks as poor. Particularly given that conceptions of poor Blacks as lazy and thus undeserving have long underpinned the association between race and poverty, I expect that Whites who believe Blacks are lazy are likely to believe Blacks are also poor.[58]

On the other hand, it is not clear how Whites with different levels of racial resentment would evaluate Blacks' economic status. Remember that racial resentment is a moralistic attitude based on a "logically consistent view of Blacks' place in society," holding that Blacks no longer face discrimination, and that their disadvantage therefore reflects lack of effort or weak commitment to American values.[59] Whites with low levels of racial resentment might resist evaluating Blacks as poor out of appreciation of class diversity within the Black community. Yet, they may also identify a large status gap between Blacks and Whites based on awareness of contemporary racial disparities. Similarly, racial resentment could lead Whites to express generally negative views about Blacks and thus evaluate them as poor. Or, racially resentful Whites might think Blacks are relatively better off, based on the belief that they have already received enough "special favors."

Thus, while status perceptions are likely influenced by traditional stereotypes, I expect they will *not* be predicted by a normative view about Blacks' place in society such as racial resentment. In other words, perceptions of the status gap between the races should be more reflective of how Whites believe the world is—even if viewed through the lens of traditional prejudice—than how the world ought to be.

> **Status perceptions hypothesis 1**: Endorsing traditional racial stereotypes will make a White individual more likely to think Blacks are poor. Expressing racial resentment will not predict how rich or poor a White individual perceives Blacks to be.

I recognize that a White individual's placement of racial groups on the rich/poor spectrum is undoubtedly influenced by a range of individual-level factors besides racial stereotypes—from early socialization to media consumption. I control for factors such as education and income to account for some of these considerations (and shortly discuss the relevance of local context). My emphasis here, however, is that perceptions of Blacks as poor relative to Whites should

58. See Katz, *The Undeserving Poor*;Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Anti-Poverty Policy*. As discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2.2.2, it is possible that some Whites who think Blacks are lazy also believe that Blacks manipulate the welfare system (or other systems) to avoid working hard. However, there arguably would be limits to how "rich" Blacks as a whole would be believed to be as a result.

59. Tarman and Sears, "The Conceptualization and Measurement of Symbolic Racism," 733.

not be reduced to a stereotype alone—if for no other reason than that Blacks *are* poorer than Whites on the whole. Perceptions of the gap between Blacks and Whites in economic standing arguably offer insight into Whites' subjective understandings of racial inequality rather than solely indicating a negative racial orientation.

Confirming *status perceptions hypothesis 1* offers one benefit beyond supporting my conceptualization of status perceptions as a material, rather than normative, evaluation about the racial order. In line with previous findings that opposition to affirmative action is more closely tied to racial resentment than to traditional prejudice, I posit racial resentment as a predictor of affirmative action views in the models presented later in this chapter.[60] Because these models also posit status perceptions as predictive of affirmative action preferences, confirming my first hypothesis demonstrates that status perceptions and racial resentment are not collinear or endogenous.

4.3.2 Status perceptions in context

If Whites' perceptions of Blacks' relative status (henceforth, BRS) reflect Whites' understanding of the racial economic order, one likely factor influencing these perceptions is local context. A long line of scholarship has upheld the principle that political behavior reflects matters of concern in people's proximate surroundings,[61] and economic evaluations are particularly sensitive to local conditions.[62] Given Blumer's original formulation of group position as shaped by environmental factors and liable to change over time, we should expect perceptions of BRS to vary according to characteristics of Whites' local geography.

This thesis draws an understanding of the relationship between context and attitudes from research into the racial threat hypothesis. Let's briefly revisit the classic formulation of the argument: seeing a proximate Black population as a source of competition for scarce resources or political power, Whites in such settings will respond with anti-Black actions or attitudes.[63] Further literature has identified economic dimensions of threat, arguing that where resources are scarcer,

60. David R. Williams et al., "Traditional and Contemporary Prejudice and Urban Whites' Support for Affirmative Action and Government Help," *Social Problems* 46, no. 4 (1999): 503–527.

61. Tobler, "A Computer Movie Simulating Urban Growth in the Detroit Region."

62. John Books and Charles Prysby, "Contextual Effects on Retrospective Economic Evaluations: The Impact of the State and Local Economy," *Political Behavior* 21, no. 1 (1999): 1–16; Reeves and Gimpel, "Ecologies of Unease: Geographic Context and National Economic Evaluations."

63. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*; Blalock, *Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations*.

race relations are more likely to seem like a zero-sum game.[64] My analysis in Part I affirmed this logic, but argued for the need to better theorize Whites' agency and subjectivity in *seeing* Blacks as threatening due to the particular prejudices with which Whites view the world.

In extending this argument to an analysis of status perceptions, I posit context as a source of information about the security of Whites' economic advantage over Blacks, based on the racial and economic demographics of a White individual's metropolitan area. Rather than seeking to identify a threat response in the form of heightened *animosity* when Whites perceive a challenge to their interests, I identify a different threat response, in the form of perceptions of Blacks as relatively *richer*. The threat here is not one associated with government support for poor and undeserving Blacks, but rather the threat of Blacks catching up to Whites economically.[65]

Recognizing that a threat to a group's interests might be perceived on either objective or subjective grounds, it is not hard to imagine the objective grounds on which Whites would evaluate Blacks as relatively richer.[66] White perceptions of BRS should be informed by the true relative standing of the races in a White individual's immediate geographic context. This conjecture is informed by the literature cited above on the relevance of local context to economic evaluations. It also draws upon previous work on Black-Latino relations finding that Blacks are sensitive to their economic standing relative to nearby Latinos.[67] I operationalize the true relative standing of Blacks and Whites as a measure of the income gap between the two racial groups in a given metropolitan area.

> **Status perceptions hypothesis 2**: The larger the Black-White income gap in a White individual's surroundings, the poorer that individual will perceive Blacks to be relative to Whites.

Of course, to say that Whites draw upon their local geographies when forming perceptions of BRS does not on its own demonstrate that the mechanics of threat are at play. It is in theorizing Whites' *subjective* responses to context that I identify instances in which Whites are prone

64. Quillian, "Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat: Population Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe."

65. To consider whether a more conventional threat response can be identified among my sample, I investigate whether either of the racial attitude measures register greater hostility among Whites in settings with larger Black populations. I find no significant effect of Black population share on either racial attitude variable. These results are reported in Appendix B. Black population share is also not found to be a significant predictor of affirmative action views, as I report in the next chapter.

66. Robert A. LeVine and Donald T. Campbell, *Ethnocentrism: Theories of Conflict, Ethnic Attitudes, and Group Behavior* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1972), 310.

67. Claudine Gay, "Seeing Difference: The Effect of Economic Disparity on Black Attitudes toward Latinos," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 4 (2006): 982–997.

to perceive a smaller status gap between the races than is warranted by objective realities. I expect to find evidence of the subjectivity of Whites' perspective in their responses to both racial and economic context.

The role of racial context

Following the predictions of the threat hypothesis, I anticipate that settings with a larger Black presence will be those where Whites are more likely to believe that Blacks are relatively richer, controlling for the true Black-White income gap. Similar logic leads me to investigate whether Whites in less segregated metropolitan areas—defined as those where Whites have greater exposure to Blacks—are likely to see Blacks as relatively better off than Whites in more segregated settings, all else equal.

These responses could reflect objective realities: metropolitan areas with larger Black populations could be those where a Black middle class is more visible. Similarly, it is nearly impossible to disentangle segregation's effects on the visibility of race from its role in concentrating poverty in Black communities, meaning that less segregated settings may be those where a larger share of Blacks *do* rank closer to Whites economically. However, if perceptions of BRS are predicted by segregation even across metropolitan areas with the same Black-White income disparity, this suggests a subjective threat perceived by Whites when race is more salient. Again, threat is evidenced by perceptions of a smaller status gap between the races: Whites will feel their privileged economic position is less secure when they are more aware of Blacks in their surroundings.

The role of economic context

I expect the subjectivity of Whites' reactions to context to be most apparent in the case of responses to economic environment—particularly as economic conditions changed dramatically over the course of the 2006-2010 GSS panel. I focus on unemployment rate as an indicator closely tied to the economic standing of groups, and one that rose from 5% nationwide in 2007 to 10% in 2009.[68]

68. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Recession of 2007-2009*, technical report (2012), http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2012/recession/pdf/recession_bls_spotlight.pdf.

If settings of economic insecurity tend to cast race relations as a zero-sum game, then settings of high unemployment should be those where Whites are more likely to sense a subjective status threat from Blacks in the form of perceiving a smaller gap between Blacks and Whites in economic status. This means I expect Blacks to be perceived as relatively *richer* in high-unemployment settings. Such a prediction seems illogical, given that Blacks have consistently borne higher rates of unemployment than Whites and suffered disproportionately during the recession of 2007-2009. Yet, an economic downturn would undoubtedly heighten the zero-sum framing of racial competition for resources, making it more likely that Blacks would be seen to benefit as Whites suffered.

My predictions regarding Whites' subjective responses to racial and economic context are summarized in the following hypotheses, both of which I expect to stand when holding the Black-White income gap constant:

> **Status threat hypothesis 1**: The greater the salience of race in a White individual's surroundings, the richer that individual will perceive Blacks to be relative to Whites.
>
> **Status threat hypothesis 2**: The higher the unemployment rate in a White individual's surroundings, the richer that individual will perceive Blacks to be relative to Whites.

Both of the above hypotheses propose that Whites' interpretations of their local contexts will be shaped in part by the subjectivity of Whites' perspective as determined by their place in the racial hierarchy. The latter hypothesis in particular inspires further reflection on how the racialized subjectivity of Whites' outlook would lead to the perception that Blacks were getting richer relative to Whites over the course of the recession.

On a basic level, the relationship proposed in my second status threat hypothesis resembles the psychological mechanism of scapegoating, or blaming an outgroup for an ingroup's suffering, in the face of a large-scale incident of misfortune such as a national economic crisis.[69] Whites may not have explicitly blamed Blacks for the recession. Yet, scapegoating tends to draw upon culturally relevant symbols—such as the White-Black color line or the election of a Black president—and could have led many Whites to believe that, if they were suffering economically, things must have been better for Blacks.

Insights from critical theory also support this logic. As Judith Butler writes—in an attempt to explain how Rodney King could be perceived as posing a threat to the police officers brutally

69. Peter Glick, "Choice of Scapegoats," *On the Nature of Prejudice* 50 (2005): 244–261.

beating him in the infamous 1991 video—"racism pervades white perception, structuring what can and cannot appear within the horizon of white perception."[70] White viewers are blind to the injustice of King's beating because they do not see the world as much as they "read" it with a schema in which Blackness "always already" presents a threat to Whites.[71] By accounting for how Whites would read a context of rapidly increasing unemployment, we can understand a seemingly illogical belief that Blacks were getting richer over the course of the recession as congruent with the predictions of the economic dimension of the conventional threat hypothesis.

Most broadly, however, the predictions of *status threat hypothesis 2* are in keeping with what Jennifer Hochshild has called "Whites' quandary:" at the same time as Whites have come to believe that discrimination no longer restrains Black outcomes and that Blacks have the power to shape their own success, Whites have also become convinced that their *own* prospects have deteriorated, that they are less able to succeed.[72] Even without the backdrop of a recession, Hochschild demonstrates the broader tendency in recent years for Whites to believe that things are improving for Blacks and worsening for Whites.

4.3.3 Status threat and opposition to affirmative action

Having theorized the influence of both racial attitudes and local context on perceptions of BRS, the question remaining is why perceptions of BRS are relevant to racial politics. Just as demands for social protection are predicted by not only income level but also one's risk of falling below that income level, I expect that both Whites' group position and the perceived security of that position will predict Whites' racial policy preferences.[73] Although this idea has been implicit in previous applications of the realistic group conflict and racial threat hypotheses, my measure of perceptions of BRS offers a novel way to identify the influence of beliefs about the security of Whites' economic position. I identify this influence in regard to White opinion about

70. Judith Butler, "Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia," chap. 1 in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993), 16.

71. Ibid., 19.

72. Jennifer L. Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation* (Princeton University Press, 1995), 68.

73. Philipp Rehm, Jacob S. Hacker, and Mark Schlesinger, "Insecure Alliances: Risk, Inequality, and Support for the Welfare State," *American Political Science Review* (New York, USA) 106, no. 2 (2012): 386–406.

affirmative action in employment, which seeks to alter the unequal economic positions of the races as they have been maintained in the labor market.

I anticipate that Whites who perceive Blacks to be relatively poorer—that is, who perceive Whites' economic advantage as more secure—will be less opposed to affirmative action than Whites who perceive Blacks as relatively richer and thus sense a more imminent threat to White status. This interpretation need not paint all Whites as hostile to Blacks' improvement: benevolent motivations could lead Whites to see a greater need for affirmative action when Blacks are believed to lag behind, and less of a need if Blacks have caught up to Whites. Either way, my emphasis is on Whites' interest in defending their economic wellbeing. I do not challenge the explanation that group interests are also behind the affective stances that lead most Whites to oppose affirmative action; instead, I hypothesize that a material evaluation will have its own predictive power, even after controlling for racial resentment and political conservatism.

Taking higher perceptions of BRS to indicate elevated concern about a status threat posed by Blacks, I propose the following hypothesis:

> **Affirmative action hypothesis 1**: Believing that Blacks pose a threat to Whites' economic status will make a White individual more likely to oppose affirmative action, all else equal. Believing that Blacks do *not* pose a threat to Whites' status will make a White individual more likely to *support* affirmative action.

Even though White support of affirmative action is rare (as discussed in Section 4.2), the above hypothesis intends to capture the direction of the relationship between perceptions of BRS and affirmative action views. For example, believing that Blacks do not pose a status threat might make a White individual simply "oppose" rather than "strongly oppose" affirmative action, which is more likely to make this individual indifferent to affirmative action than supportive of it. All the same, a move toward indifference is notable for a policy approach that has attracted opposition as strong as affirmative action has.

Defending the operation of a status threat

I now consider two possible objections to my argument that the relationship between perceptions of BRS and affirmative action views reflects a status threat response.

Whether Blacks "need" affirmative action First, do Whites who perceive a smaller status gap simply think affirmative action is less necessary? Consider an alternate interpretation of *affirmative action hypothesis 1*: perhaps it is not about Blacks encroaching on Whites' economic position, but rather that Whites believe there is less need for affirmative action as they see Blacks' collective economic status improve. This is the interpretation that Jhally and Lewis offer in their mid-1990s studies of reactions to *The Cosby Show*, discussed above. I suggest that this interpretation does not make the rhetoric of threat irrelevant.

For one, evidence of threat is already at play in the formation of Whites' perceptions of BRS—perceptions that go on to inform views on affirmative action. If (a) Whites become more opposed to affirmative action because they believe it is less necessary; but, (b) that belief is a product of their reading the world through a racialized lens (e.g. believing Blacks are getting richer as a result of rising unemployment and related insecurity about Whites' economic status); then (c) opposition to affirmative action on "need-based" grounds would nonetheless be motivated by concern for Whites' position over Blacks.

Furthermore, to think affirmative action is "less necessary" when Blacks are richer suggests Whites' interest in maintaining some advantage over Blacks—or rather, the use of Whites as a reference point in evaluating Blacks' need for affirmative action. In support of this argument, I confirm that *absolute* status perceptions are not predictive of affirmative action views in the GSS panel. Only a measure that takes account of the *distance* between Whites and Blacks on a rich/poor spectrum will be predictive of affirmative action views. In other words, simply believing that Blacks are poor does not motivate need-based support for affirmative action if a White individual does not also believe that Whites are considerably richer, and thus that Blacks do not pose a status threat.

Whether affluent Blacks are threatening A second challenge to *affirmative action hypothesis 1* concerns the logic of suggesting that Whites would perceive a threat posed by higher-status Blacks. This logic challenges not only scholars who explicitly argue that class is more important than race (and thus that race should become increasingly irrelevant as Blacks' status rises), but also the more implicit assumption in literature on racial threat that better-off Blacks will be seen as less threatening by Whites.

One foundation for this argument/assumption comes from the work of William Julius Wilson, whose concern with the gulf between the Black poor and non-poor leads him to focus on the absolute status of Blacks. To be clear, Wilson does not deny the possibility of a threat posed by the Black middle class: he instead argues that the growth of employment opportunities for all Americans in the 1970s kept rising Black status from posing a competitive threat to Whites.[74] By arguing that Blacks will most likely be seen to pose a status threat in high-unemployment settings, I make a complementary, though converse, argument to Wilson's original one.

At the same time, Wilson has been cited in subsequent studies of the racial threat hypothesis as implying that affluent Blacks are not threatening.[75] One prominent study has found that settings with higher-status Blacks are associated with lower levels of perceived threat—arguing that improvements in Blacks' status would not only improve life outcomes but also would "diminish threat, and hence, ameliorate racial hostility."[76] More generally, the literature on racial threat rarely engages with how both the race and class of a proximate Black population (in contrast to economic conditions across a given context) would influence the political behavior of Whites.

There are exceptions to this. For instance, Marylee Taylor's study of the effect of local racial context on policy preferences argues that high and low-status Blacks are equally "threatening."[77] Emerging scholarship on the relationship between state-level racial income disparities and welfare outcomes has also touched on the possibility of a threat response in reaction to improvements in Black status. Tetsuya Matsubayashi and Renee Rocha find that a state's Black-White income disparity exacerbates the negative effect of a Black population share on the generosity of state welfare provision.[78] Rodney Hero and Morris Levy similarly suggest that "threats would presumably be more intense as majority and minority statuses become more equal, rather than less" (although the authors do not test this hypothesis).[79]

74. See Chapter 5 of Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*.

75. See footnote 6 in Quillian, "Group Threat and Regional Change in Attitudes Toward African-Americans."

76. Micheal W. Giles and Arthur S. Evans, "External Threat, Perceived Threat and Group Identity," *Social Science Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (1985): 62.

77. Taylor, "How White Attitudes Vary with the Racial Composition of Local Populations: Numbers Count."

78. Tetsuya Matsubayashi and Renee R. Rocha, "Racial Diversity and Public Policy in the States," *Political Research Quarterly* 65 (2012): 600–614.

79. Hero and Levy, "The Racial Structure of Inequality: Consequences for Welfare Policy in the United States." Hero and Levy make this point when expressing doubt about the psychological mechanism of threat, or at least their conception of it. In an analysis of the relationship between state-level racial inequality and support for welfare spending, the authors offer support for the social affinity hypothesis and question the racial threat hypothesis, suggesting that a "threat" in the form of a proximate Black population is not necessary to increase White opposition to welfare spending. Specifically, states with larger Black populations are not found to introduce less generous welfare policies in the wake of the 1996 reforms.

Yet, few have considered the dynamics at play in Whites' perceptions of non-poor Blacks as distinct from Whites' construal of the undifferentiated Black masses as threatening. Particularly given that the Black middle class has grown in the 40 years since Wilson wrote, it is conceivable that Whites would see a distinct threat represented by the Blacks with whom jobs must be competed for—including at positions higher up the income ladder.

When will perceiving a status threat come into play?

In theorizing a possible status threat response, I do not reject the premise that low-status Blacks tend to be viewed negatively by Whites, or the implication that high-status Blacks will be less associated with the stigmas of poverty. Drawing upon literature emphasizing Whites' racial policy preferences as multidimensional, I expect that Whites will simultaneously evaluate affirmative action according to their concerns about the security of Whites' economic privilege *and* their evaluations of Blacks as "deserving" beneficiaries.

Such multidimensionality accords with previous research on affirmative action preferences and issue framing. Kinder and Sanders find that when affirmative action is framed as giving Blacks an "undeserved advantage," racial prejudice is most predictive of preferences; alternately, concerns about group interests are the strongest predictor when the frame emphasizes "reverse discrimination" against Whites.[80] These two frames recall the argument made by Charlotte Cavaillé and Kris-Stella Trump that preferences on redistribution "to" and redistribution "from" are distinct attitudinal dimensions. Resolving the conflict between competing predictions that views on redistribution are the product of either material self-interest or affinity with a policy's beneficiaries, these authors demonstrate that these concerns can exist simultaneously within a given individual's redistributive

When Hero and Levy then comment that *lesser* inequality between Whites and Blacks would more logically lead Whites to oppose policies intended to help Blacks, they support the argument I am making in this chapter. However, they consequently dismiss the relevance of threat altogether. Hero and Levy admit that their inclusion of state-level fixed effects subjects the threat hypothesis to a stringent test, as states' Black populations change little over the years they analyze. But the authors reveal a limited definition of threat, allowing only for the conventional finding of a negative relationship between Black population size and welfare generosity, and consequently exemplifying the habit of equating threat with a Black population itself (as discussed in Chapter 1 Section 1.1.2). The authors further conceptualize in-group affinity as if a group's understanding of itself were independent of its position in the racial hierarchy, exemplifying the habit of ignoring the power differential that shapes Whites' as opposed to Blacks' engagement and influence in racial politics (as discussed in Chapter 1 Section 1.1.1). In sum, Hero and Levy's critique of the threat mechanism offers support for my articulation of a status threat in Part II, even as it manifests the quintessential shortcomings of applications of the racial threat hypothesis.

80. Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, "Mimicking Political Debate with Survey Questions: The Case of White Opinion on Affirmative Action for Blacks," *Social Cognition* 8, no. 1 (1990): 73.

preferences.[81] We might similarly understand affirmative action as redistribution both "from" Whites and "to" Blacks. Perceptions of BRS should be most pertinent to the "from" dimension: defensiveness over Whites' own position should exacerbate opposition to affirmative action if Blacks are perceived to pose a threat to White status.

The "to" dimension of affirmative action preferences, on the other hand, would concern evaluations of Blacks' deservingness as beneficiaries. Such evaluations would likely be influenced by a White individual's level of racial resentment, in keeping with Whites' aversion to redistributing resources or opportunities to low-income Black communities characterized as undeserving of support. My aim in investigating the "to" dimension of affirmative action preferences, however, is to better understand the operation of a status threat response. *Under what circumstances* is perceiving a status threat most influential of Whites' affirmative action preferences? My conjecture is that Whites' status perceptions will be a second-order concern, revealing their effect after concerns about deservingness are minimized.

I test this conjecture by returning to my focus on material conditions in Whites' local geography. On the grounds that low-status Black communities are likely to be deemed less deserving of support, I expect that Whites living in proximity to these communities will be less likely to support affirmative action's distribution of employment opportunities to Blacks. Correspondingly, Whites living in proximity to high-status Black communities, more likely to be deemed "respectable," should be more amenable to affirmative action, all else equal.[82]

In other words, whether or not a White individual is worried about the security of Whites' economic status, he or she is unlikely to support distributing employment opportunities to a low-status and thus seemingly undeserving Black population. In a metropolitan area where the Black population is higher-status, however, we would expect a greater divergence between Whites who feel their status is secure and those who feel it is insecure. Whites in the former category would be considerably more supportive of distributing opportunities to the "respectable"

81. Cavaillé and Trump, "The Two Facets of Social Policy Preferences."

82. The word "respectable" brings to mind scholarship on the politics of respectability—or the policing of a marginalized group's actions and appearance by group members themselves. This chapter lacks the scope to fully explore this concept's roots in Black feminist work (see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993)) or its larger influence in the Black community (for a review, see Fredrick C. Harris, "The Rise of Respectability Politics," *Dissent* 61, no. 1 (2014): 33–37). However, my reference to respectability intends to evoke a problematized concept that has become part of White America's governance and judgment of Black Americans as a disproportionately disadvantaged population. For one of several examples of work on this topic, see Soss, Fording, and Schram, *Disciplining the Poor: Neoliberal Paternalism and the Persistent Power of Race*.

Black community in this area than Whites who perceive a status threat. These expectations are summarized in my final hypothesis.

> **Affirmative action hypothesis 2**: In settings where the median Black income is low (and Blacks are likely to be deemed "undeserving"), Whites who feel their status over Blacks is secure will nonetheless express similar opposition to affirmative action as Whites who feel their status over Blacks is insecure.
>
> In settings where the median Black income is high (and Blacks are likely to be deemed "respectable"), there will be a greater polarization in affirmative action preferences between Whites who feel their status is secure, and Whites who feel their status is insecure.

As authors ranging from Douglass to Wilson suggest, the primary hurdle to clear may be lifting the absolute status of Black Americans, bringing with it the benefit of dismantling racial stereotypes among Whites. Yet, the theory presented in this chapter proposes that there may be a secondary hurdle beyond that if Blacks' rising status *relative* to Whites is seen to pose a new threat to Whites' economic privilege, thus making even racially progressive Whites less supportive of initiatives to close the gulf between the races.

[M]ost groups are deceived about themselves. Rationalization and the incessant search for scapegoats are the psychological cataracts that blind us to our individual and collective sins.

- Martin Luther King, Jr. (1967)
Where Do We Go from Here

5

Status Anxiety: A Defensive Dimension of Racialized Preferences

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This chapter presents evidence for the operation of a status threat that is perceived by Whites when their local surroundings suggest their privileged position is insecure, and predictive of White attitudes on affirmative action. In doing so, the chapter reveals how Whites' habit of rationalization, identified by Martin Luther King Jr. half a century ago, came into play during the 2007-2009 recession plunging the American economy into its deepest dive since the Great Depression.

I begin the chapter by introducing my data and methods with a focus on the central concept driving my analysis—White perceptions of the gap between Blacks and Whites in economic

standing. My analysis centers on data from a 2006-2010 GSS panel, but throughout the chapter, I incorporate supporting evidence from the ANES.

The second section of the chapter analyzes changes in Whites' status perceptions over the course of the panel, showing that this evaluation is distinct from racial resentment; responsive to Whites' local surroundings; and reflective of Whites' potential to be "deceived about themselves" and the realities of racial hierarchy. I illuminate the objective but also subjective influences of Whites' local surroundings on their perceptions of the economic order, postulating that the hardships of the recession led Whites to assume that, if they were becoming poorer, Blacks must have been becoming richer.

The chapter then concludes by demonstrating the relevance of perceiving a status threat to racial politics using the example of affirmative action preferences. Whites express greater opposition to affirmative action in settings where Blacks are perceived to be catching up to Whites in relative standing; but there is greater support for affirmative action in settings where Blacks are better off in absolute terms, and thus less likely to be cast as undeserving beneficiaries. These two effects together suggest that improvements in Blacks' economic position may, paradoxically, make Whites more defensive of their privileged status even as it leads them to see Blacks as worthier of support.

5.1 Data and Methods

The previous chapter explained that affirmative action in the workplace has been minimally contentious since the 1990s. However, it has remained a topic of "hot cognition"—one on which individuals' attitudes "come to mind automatically along with, indeed prior to, semantic information."[1] Given the instinctive responses many Americans have to affirmative action, it is unsurprising that White views on the subject register little movement over the course of a panel conducted by the GSS in three waves between 2006 and 2010.[2] I isolate the non-Hispanic Whites

1. Charles S. Taber and Milton Lodge, "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs," *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 3 (2006): 755–769.

2. Data are weighted to reflect the two-stage sub-sampling design introduced by the GSS in 2004, a change made in order to follow up with a subsample of the households that were nonresponsive in the first stage of the survey. For more information on weights in the GSS, see the Release Notes for the 2006-2010 Survey available via the NORC website.

who reside in non-rural settings to define a sample of 1,107 respondents in 2006; 870 of these participate in the second wave of the panel, and 726 in the third wave.

On the contrary, White opinion on the relative economic standing of Blacks and Whites does register movement during the panel. In this section, I discuss my measurement of White perceptions of the economic order and how these perceptions changed against the backdrop of the recession. I then summarize the other concepts and methods I use to build my analysis of status perceptions as predicted by context and predictive of affirmative action.

5.1.1 Status perceptions in a time of recession

To capture views of the economic distance between Blacks and Whites, I focus on the GSS variables asking whether members of a racial group are either "rich" or "poor" on a 1-7 scale. I take the absolute value of the difference between a respondent's evaluations of Blacks and Whites and then rescale the variable between 0 and 10 to create my measure of perceptions of BRS (M =3.96, $S.D.$ = 1.05). Higher values reflect evaluations of Blacks as relatively richer, or, in other words, closer to Whites in economic standing. Compared to the mean placement of Blacks at 3.96 on the 0-10 scale, the average placement of Whites is 6.04.

Perceptions of BRS register a small but statistically significant increase ($p < 0.05$) among Whites in the sample from 2006 to 2010. Table 5.1 summarizes the change in the component parts of the status perceptions variable over the panel. The gap narrows by about 15% from a difference of 1.32 to 1.14, and is driven by perceptions of Blacks becoming richer over the panel, and, to a smaller extent, perceptions of Whites becoming poorer.

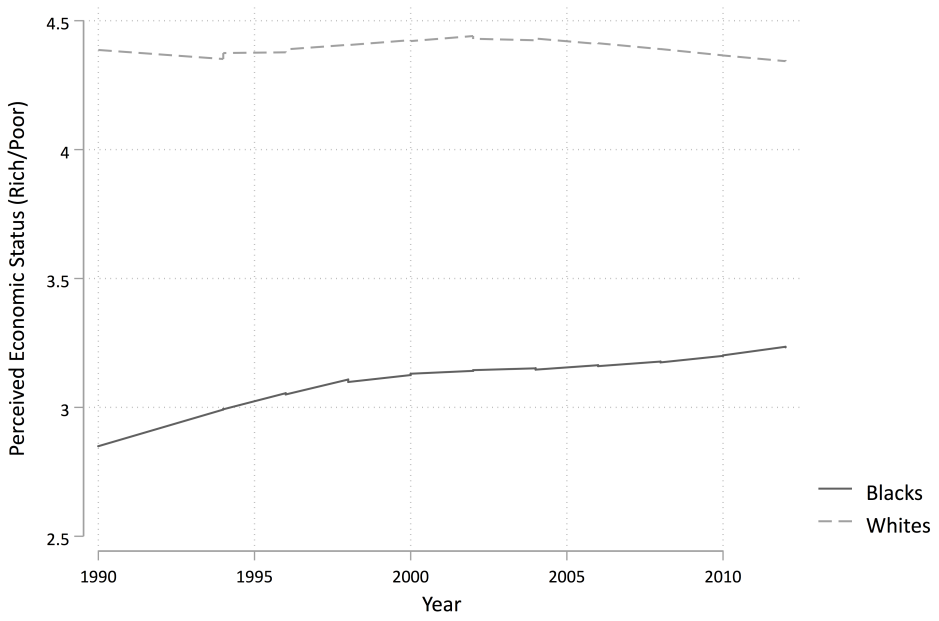
Table 5.1: Changing Perceptions of Whites and Blacks as Rich/Poor

	2006	**2008**	**2010**
Whites	4.41	4.40	4.35
Blacks	3.09	3.14	3.21
Δ	1.32	1.26	1.14

Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey (n = 1,769). Labels reflect Whites' mean evaluations of each racial group in a given year. Scale spans from "poor" = 1 to "rich" = 7.

Although surveys such as the ANES or Cooperative Congressional Election Study do not survey perceptions of Blacks as rich or poor during the same period, a shrinking gap between Whites and Blacks has been the trend since the GSS introduced the rich/poor scale in 1990. Visualized in Figure 5.1, this narrowing reflects real changes over the past three decades.

Figure 5.1: Perceived Economic Gains by Blacks, 1990-2010



Source: General Social Survey data encompassing 1990-2010 (n = 12,090). Graph reflects lowess curves of the placement of Blacks and Whites on the 1-7 scale ranging from "poor" to "rich" by White GSS respondents from 1990 to 2010. Because the GSS only began asking about Hispanic origin in 2000, the figure includes all White respondents regardless of Hispanic origin.

How logical is it for this trend to continue against the backdrop of the recession? Although more than half of all American families lost at least a quarter of their wealth between 2007 and 2011, White households were considerably less likely to lose any wealth compared to Black and other minority households.[3] Overall, Black American families experienced a decline of 30% in their mean net worth compared to White families' 10% decline in mean net worth.[4] Foreclosures played a central role in this process, reflecting the disproportionate targeting of

3. Whites were "30 percent less likely to have lost any wealth, 37.5 percent less likely to have fallen into debt, and 74 percent less likely to have lost at least $250,000" compared to Black and other minority race families, according to Fabian T. Pfeffer, Sheldon Danziger, and Robert F. Schoeni, "Wealth Disparities Before and After the Great Recession," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 650, no. 1 (2013): 10.

4. Robert Argento Ackerman, Gerhard Fries, and Richard A. Windle, "Changes in US Family Finances from 2007 to 2010: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances," *Federal Reserve Bulletin* 100 (2012): 1–80.

Blacks for subprime mortgage loans since well before the housing boom of 2003-2007. As of 2000, residents of majority Black neighborhoods were *five times* more likely to refinance in the subprime market than residents of White neighborhoods at the same income level.[5] And as of 2010, Black families were 47% more likely to experience foreclosure than White families.[6] But unemployment also hit Blacks harder, particularly when accounting for forgone employment—not only jobs but also job *growth* lost thanks to the downturn. As of 2009, Black employment was down by 11.3 percentage points from the projected numbers in the absence of a recession, whereas White employment was down by 7.4 percentage points.[7] Increases in Black and White unemployment are illustrated in Figure 5.2. Especially because White families began to see gains in their wealth again beginning in 2009 and 2010 while Black wealth continued to slide, the impact of this recession is anticipated to be visible for generations to come.[8]

However, Figure 5.2 also makes clear the economic setback that White families experienced relative to their standing before the recession, even if their wealth still dwarfed that of Blacks. Such circumstances make it less surprising that Whites were not accurately attuned to how Blacks were experiencing the same decline. This is particularly the case given both the trend of seeing a narrowing status gap over the last decades, and the broader "quandary" of Whites today being likely to think that Black fortunes are improving and White ones are declining.[9]

Of course, the GSS panel conspicuously spans the election of our first Black president. It is possible that having a nationally salient example of a high-status Black American led many Whites to believe that Blacks as a group were relatively richer. Even so, such an effect would be congruent with the relationships I have hypothesized. First, Whites across the country would have had more or less equal exposure to a possible "Obama effect," justifying an investigation of how

5. HUD-Treasury Joint Task Force, *Curbing Predatory Home Mortgage Lending*, technical report (US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2000).

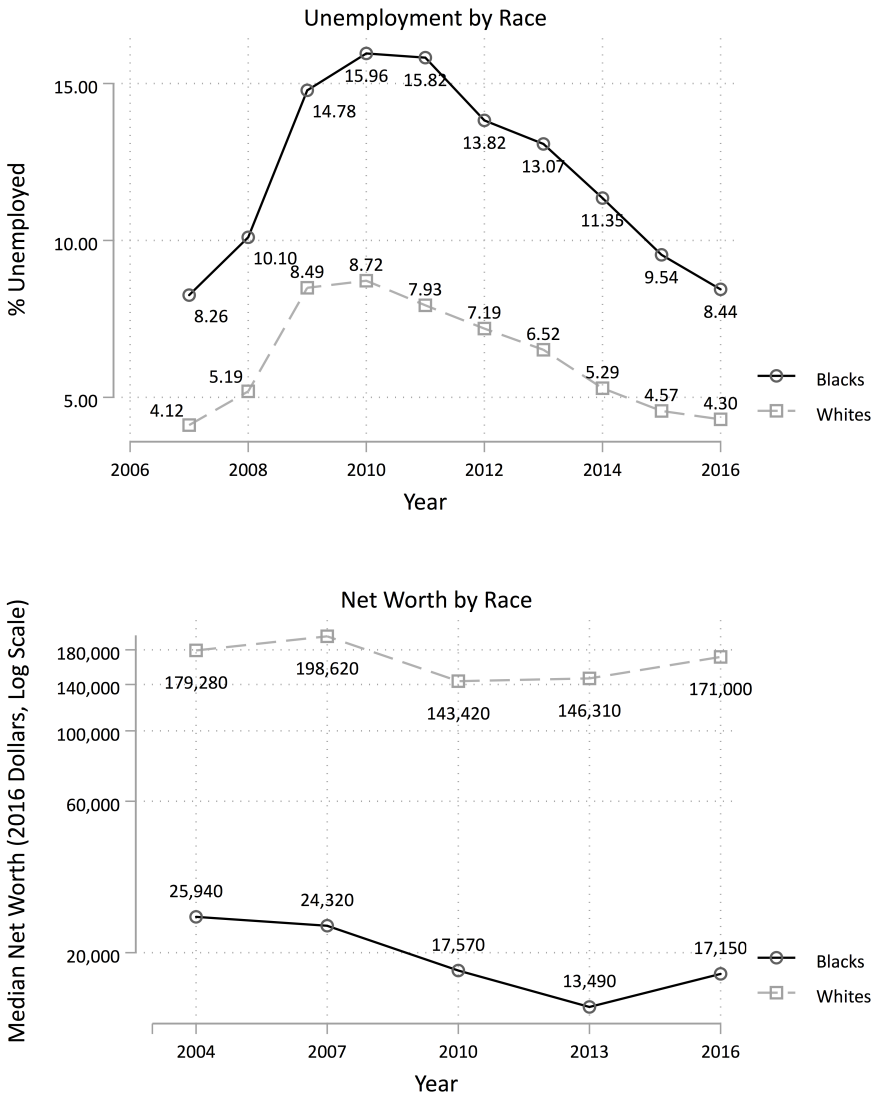
6. Debbie Gruenstein Bocian, Wei Li, and Keith S. Ernst, "Foreclosures by Race and Ethnicity," *Center for Responsible Lending*, 2010, 4–6.

7. See Howard J. Wall, "This Recession's Effect on Employment: How It Stacks Up for Blacks, Whites, Men and Women," *Bridges* 10 (2009). Taking account of both race and gender, Wall's analysis points out further disparities: the toll of the recession on male-dominated industries such as construction and manufacturing meant that men saw greater decreases in employment than did women, but because employment has also tended to grow faster for women, forgone employment was greater for women. Combined with race, this means that in regard to employment, the recession hit Black women twice as hard as White women.

8. Sarah Burd-Sharps and Rebecca Rasch, *Impact of the US Housing Crisis on the Racial Wealth Gap Across Generations*, technical report (Social Science Research Council, 2015), https://www.aclu.org/files/field_document/discrimlend_final.pdf.

9. Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation*, 68.

Figure 5.2: The Recession's Impact on Employment and Net Worth



Top graph depicts annual average of seasonally adjusted unemployment rates for both Black and White Americans (aged 16 years and over). Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey 2007-2016. Bottom graph depicts family net worth in 2016 dollars. Source: Survey of Consumer Finances, Federal Reserve Bank Historic Tables 1989-2016.

local context may have shaped perceptions of BRS beyond any nationwide shift.[10] Second, the subjectivity of Whites seeing Blacks as relatively richer when race is more salient—across areas with the same racial income disparity—is similar to the subjectivity of a potential Obama effect. Whether Obama offered a prominent example of Black success or simply made race more salient,

10. See Susan Welch and Lee Sigelman, "The "Obama Effect" and White Racial Attitudes," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 634, no. 1 (2011): 207–220.

neither is equivalent to a change in the economic status of Blacks as a whole. Third, because the 2008 election was heralded as the start of a postracial era, it increased the cultural relevance of beliefs that barriers to Black progress had been broken down—making these beliefs more likely to play into the scapegoating of Blacks during the recession.

5.1.2 Individual-level variables

My measurement of racial attitudes follows the same procedure as in Part I, discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3.1.1 and briefly rearticulated here. To address the likelihood that perceptions of BRS are influenced by racial stereotypes, I control for respondents' placement of Blacks on a scale from "hardworking" to "lazy." I adjust this variable by each respondent's corresponding evaluation of Whites as hardworking or lazy and rescale it between 0 and 10 (M = 5.53, *S.D.* = 1.12).

To measure racial resentment, which I expect to predict affirmative action views but not perceptions of BRS, I follow Tarman and Sears's factor analysis of the GSS.[11] Through exploratory factor analysis with oblique rotations, I extract a factor capturing agreement with three beliefs. First, worse outcomes for Blacks are due to a lack of motivation to succeed; second, Blacks no longer face discrimination; and third, Blacks should "work their way up" as other minority groups have done. Factor loadings are reported in the appendix. The racial resentment variable is also scaled between 0 and 10, with higher values reflecting more racially conservative attitudes (M = 6.39, *S.D.* = 2.37). Factor loadings are reported in Table 5.2.

I have posited the laziness stereotype as likely to be related to perceptions of BRS, but I expect racial resentment to be uncorrelated with perceptions of BRS. Visualizing the distribution of status perceptions across the range of both racial attitudes illustrates this is in fact the case: while the correlation between perceptions of BRS and the laziness stereotype is -0.23, the correlation between perceptions of BRS and racial resentment is only 0.08 (Figure 5.3).

I operationalize political conservatism using dummy variables for party identification rather than self-placement on an ideological scale. This choice reflects the parties' stances on opposing sides of the "culture war" over affirmative action.[12] Furthermore, as mentioned in Part I and pointed

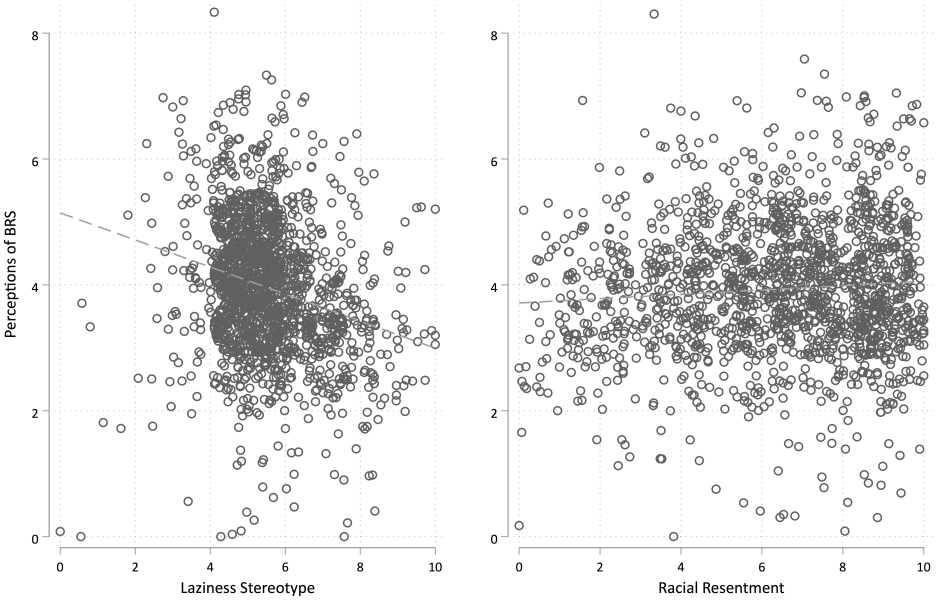
11. Tarman and Sears, "The Conceptualization and Measurement of Symbolic Racism."
12. Hochschild, "Affirmative Action as Culture War."

Table 5.2: Racial Attitude Factor Loadings

	SR Factor	OFR Factor
Symbolic racism (SR)		
Discrimination not responsible for racial disparities	**0.28**	-0.09
Lack of motivation is responsible for disparities	**0.29**	**0.25**
Blacks should work their way up; no special favors	**0.38**	0.09
Old-fashioned racism (OFR)		
Lack of inborn ability is responsible for disparities	0.02	**0.33**
Blacks lack intelligence (compared to Whites)	0.05	**0.28**

Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey (n = 2,916). Table reports coefficients from exploratory factor analysis, oblique rotations, including all non-Black respondents. Bolded values exceed 0.20. Note that only the symbolic racism (SR) factor is used for the present analysis, although I refer to this measure more generally as "racial resentment." Also note that, while Part II uses data collected 6-10 years after the data that informed Part I, similar patterns emerge from my factor analysis of the GSS in both cases.

Figure 5.3: Racial Attitudes and Perceptions of Blacks' Relative Status



Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey (n = 1,783). Perceptions of Blacks' relative status are measured on the Y-axis; higher values indicate evaluations of Blacks as relatively richer compared to Whites, or rather, perceptions of a smaller status gap between the races.

out by Strolovitch in reference to the work of Sniderman and Piazza, self-identification as liberal or conservative is likely to be an endogenous predictor of affirmative action as an attitude that

itself likely informs one's self-identification as liberal or conservative.[13] Other control variables drawn from the GSS include age, education, gender, marital status, and income.

Finally, the GSS surveys attitudes on affirmative action with the following question:

> Some people say that because of past discrimination, Blacks should be given preference in hiring and promotion. Others say that such preference in hiring and promotion of Blacks is wrong because it discriminates against Whites. What about your opinion – are you for or against preferential hiring and promotion of Blacks?

Responses to this question tend to be negative: 55-60% of White GSS respondents strongly oppose affirmative action in each wave of the panel, with 25-30% opposing and only 12-15% either supporting or strongly supporting it. This widespread opposition is unsurprising given literature discussed in the previous chapter finding that the use of the language of "preferences" to describe affirmative action is more polarizing than "making extra effort" to hire and promote Blacks. The ANES uses the same phrasing and finds similar opposition among White respondents: an average of 66% strongly oppose affirmative action between the 2004 and 2016 election studies, around 22% oppose, and only 12% support or strongly support the approach.

The similarity between the responses of the Whites in the GSS sample and the larger sample surveyed by the ANES between 2004 and 2012 offers assurance that the views of the panel are in keeping with national sentiment among White Americans. In the panel dataset, there is a small but significant drop in opposition to affirmative action between 2006 and 2008, though the opposition bounces back in 2010. The ANES, on the contrary, registers a small spike in opposition to affirmative action between 2004 and 2008, cautioning against the interpretation that the moderation in affirmative action views in the GSS sample is reflective of nationwide change.

In my analysis, I retain the categorical coding of the original variable (ranging from strong opposition = 4 to strong support = 1) to capture variation in both the strength and direction of one's views on affirmative action. I also create a binary version of the outcome variable (oppose = 1), which allows me to run a second iteration of my analysis including fixed effects for each individual, adding confidence to my interpretation of the relationship between attitudes and contexts.

13. Strolovitch, "Playing Favorites: Public Attitudes Toward Race- and Gender-Targeted Anti-Discrimination Policy."

5.1.3 Operationalizing urban contexts

With access to the GSS location files, I am able to locate the panel respondents in 117 MSAs and integrate MSA-level demographics into the dataset.[14] The decision to operationalize context at the MSA level is motivated by several considerations, echoing the discussion in Part I (see Chapter 3 Section 3.1.2). I expect that the White respondents will be broadly aware of racial outgroups and economic conditions in their larger surroundings, even if they sort into neighborhoods based on race or income. Focusing on MSAs rather than counties further recognizes the fact that many individuals cross county lines in their daily activities and will be exposed to a media market covering the larger area. Finally, MSAs are the units for which segregation is typically measured, allowing me to account for how the nonrandom patterning of race and income leads perceptions of one's surroundings to differ from demographic realities.[15]

One consideration to add in Part II is that the MSA is the geographic container in which people typically compete for jobs. Although Part I argued that a match between the arena in which opinion is measured and the arena within which a policy is administered is not necessary for local context to shape policy preferences, my analysis in Part II builds on previous findings that the MSA is a relevant geography in which to analyze White opinions on affirmative action.[16]

I use census data to measure the percentage of Blacks in a metropolitan area, transformed by the natural logarithm to account for the right skew of the variable's distribution.[17] Residential segregation data come from analysis of the 2010 census data conducted by the US2010 project at Brown University. As in Part I, I use the exposure index of segregation in order to capture how residential patterns shape Whites' experiences of racial diversity. I focus on the exposure index's measure of White-Black "interaction" in residential settings, reflecting the proportion of Black households with which the average White household in an MSA will share a neighborhood. Discussed in detail in Chapter 3 Section 3.3.1, this measure represents higher levels of segregation at its *lowest* values, where Whites have a low probability of sharing neighborhoods with Blacks. It

14. As in Part I, where it is applicable I use data for MDs, the subcategories into which the 11 largest MSAs are divided. Over the course of the panel, 181 individuals move from one MSA to another. Thus, the starting number of MSAs (and MDs) in 2006 is 79.

15. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*.

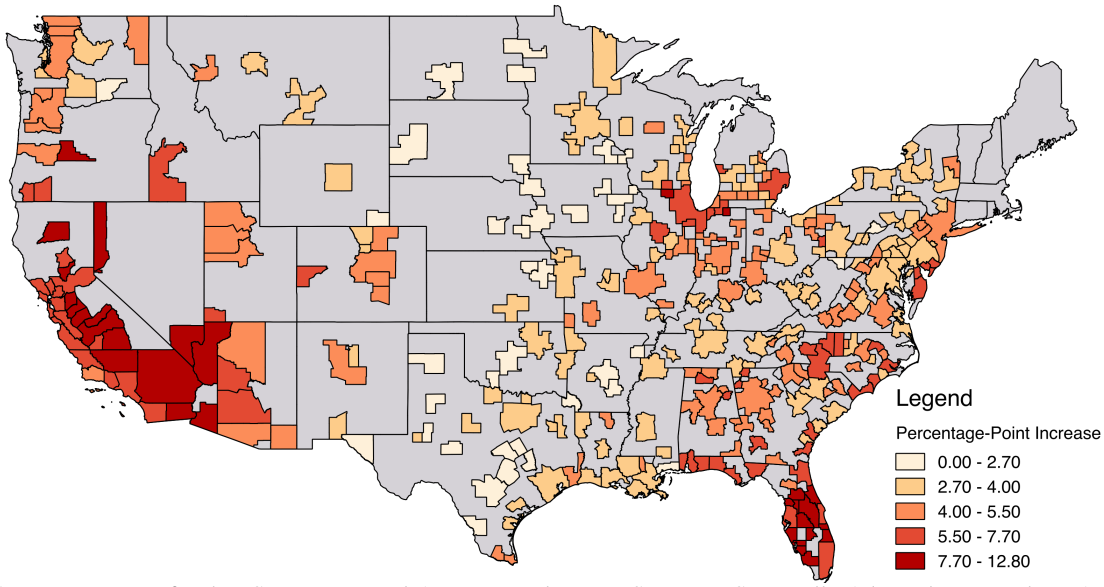
16. Oliver and Mendelberg, "Reconsidering the Environmental Determinants of White Racial Attitudes."

17. Use of the 1-year estimates of the American Community Survey (ACS) allows me to make full use of the panel data and examine dynamic contexts over the three years over which respondents were surveyed. Note, however, the drawback of using annual measures is lesser accuracy of the data than provided in the 3-year or 5-year ACS estimates.

reaches a maximum where the proportion of Blacks in the average White household's neighborhood is equal to the total proportion of Blacks in the MSA. The exposure index is therefore correlated with Black population share while also adding a new layer of spatial information to my analysis.

MSA-level unemployment data are drawn from the Bureau of Labor Statistics as measured in July of each year of the panel. Figure 5.4 illustrates where unemployment rose the most between the start of the panel in 2006 and the end of the panel in 2010.

Figure 5.4: Rising Unemployment by MSA: 2006-2010



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Seasonally Adjusted Metropolitan Area Estimates. Figure depicts percentage-point increase in unemployment rates by MSA between July 2006 and July 2010.

Income data are drawn from the census and adjusted by the Consumer Price Index to reflect 2010 dollars. To capture the absolute status of the racial groups, I use census measures of median household income in an MSA for White and Black householders. Using this measure brings the assumption that all members of a household are of the same race as the householder. However, the rate of interracial marriages was only 6% as of 2013 (up from 1% in 1970), meaning mixed-race households would comprise no more than a small percentage in most settings.[18] The median household income also has the advantage of being less sensitive to outliers than the mean, just as MSA residents are likely aware of the economic status of most group members even if aware of small communities that are very wealthy or very poor. To capture the relative standing of racial

18. Wendy Wang, "Interracial Marriage: Who Is 'Marrying Out'?," *Pew Research Center*, 2015, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/12/interracial-marriage-who-is-marrying-out/.

groups in an area, I subtract the Black median income from the equivalent measure for Whites in each MSA and refer to this measure as the "Black-White income gap."[19]

Another way to operationalize the economic status of the races would be to focus on wealth, where the economic disparity between Blacks and Whites is most severe.[20] However, income is more easily measured across geographies and also more closely tied to employment than is wealth, since wealth accumulation is helped by intergenerational transfer.[21]

5.1.4 Analyzing panel data

I use linear models to estimate Whites' ranking on the 0-10 scale capturing perceptions of BRS, and logistic models to estimate the probability of a White individual holding a particular stance on affirmative action, reporting robust standard errors in all cases. Two strategies allow me to take advantage of a panel of data from the same respondents over the course of three years: incorporating dynamic measures of context, and adding individual-level fixed effects.

First, in my analysis of perceptions of BRS, I incorporate dynamic measures to examine how perceptions of BRS respond to rapid rises in unemployment over the course of the recession. I do this in lieu of incorporating individual-level fixed effects (which, rather than estimating the underlying distribution of unit effects in a population, capture the unit effect itself by standardizing all variables by their average value within each individual over the course of the panel) and instead allow for random effects in my perceptions of BRS models. This decision is made on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Theoretically, I am interested in how perceptions of BRS vary between Whites who live in different settings. I expect this variation to be predicted in part by longstanding characteristics of MSAs: neither the size of a Black population nor the median income is likely to register much change over the course of a few years. Empirically, support for allowing random effects comes from a Hausman test on the final contextual models

19. The occasional instances where the Black-White income gap is negative (places in which Black median households income is higher than White median income) are almost exclusively those where Blacks make up very small percentages of the population and may be sensitive to measurement error.

20. Melvin L. Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*, 2nd ed. (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006).

21. William G. Gale and John Karl Scholz, "Intergenerational Transfers and the Accumulation of Wealth," *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 8, no. 4 (1994): 145–160.

of perceptions of BRS indicating that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that unique errors for each individual (u_i) are uncorrelated with the predictor variables.

When modeling affirmative action preferences, however, I do incorporate individual-level fixed effects. This allows me to analyze how variation in perceptions of BRS within a given individual is related to that person's views on affirmative action—thus accounting for unobserved variables at the individual level. I report the results of my fixed effects analysis along with random effects models, as both approaches offer insight: it is one thing to examine the effect of variation in an individual's attitudes or surroundings, and another to compare how particular attitudes or surroundings shape different individuals' political opinions. If I find significant effects of perceptions of BRS on affirmative action preferences not only between individuals but also within a given individual, I can argue with greater confidence for the role status perceptions play in predicting policy preferences.

Analyzing longitudinal data helps address the danger of self-selection in studies of contextual effects, and offers an advancement on the analysis presented in Part I. Concerns about self-selection are further reduced by my focus on larger geographies: it is costlier to move to a new metropolitan area than it is to move to a more favorable neighborhood within the same area. Recent longitudinal work has also demonstrated that concerns of self-selection even at the neighborhood level are likely overstated.[22] Separately, I confirm that those who drop out of the panel do not skew the results: they are broadly similar to those who remain in the panel in terms of affirmative action views, party identification, and racial attitudes.

Nonetheless, there remains the possibility that my findings reflect respondents choosing to live in locations that reflect their preferences, rather than their preferences being informed by their surroundings.[23] It is not immediately clear why individuals who think Blacks are relatively better off would select into MSAs with larger Black population shares or with higher levels of unemployment. On the other hand, patterns in public opinion on affirmative action may reflect factors related to state or regional characteristics that shape policy preferences, apart from the MSA-level factors I identify. To address this possibility, I conduct iterations of the analysis controlling for region and find that the same relationships hold (see Appendix B.2). Ultimately, I do not claim

22. Kaufmann and Harris, "'White Flight' or Positive Contact? Local Diversity and Attitudes to Immigration in Britain."

23. Charles M. Tiebout, "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures," *The Journal of Political Economy* 64, no. 5 (1956): 416–424; Patrick Bayer and Robert McMillan, *Tiebout Sorting and Neighborhood Stratification*, technical report 17364 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2011), http://www.nber.org/papers/w17364.

to identify the "effects" of contexts, but instead use contextual indicators to identify patterns of opinion that reflect place-specific histories, cultures, and experiences.

5.2 The Effect of Local Context on Status Perceptions

I begin my empirical analysis by identifying the individual-level and contextual factors that predict Whites' perceptions of BRS. The results of random-effects generalized least squares regression in Table 5.3 reveal that the Black laziness stereotype is indeed a significant predictor of perceptions of BRS, but racial resentment is not. These results are consistent with *status perceptions hypothesis 1*. If anything, being racially resentful is associated with perceiving Blacks as slightly closer to Whites in economic standing (consistent with the idea that Blacks have already gotten more help than they deserve), though this relationship is not statistically significant.

The significance of the laziness stereotype leads me to use the first model in Table 5.3 as the base model for the remainder of my analysis of perceptions of BRS. This model also recognizes that older White respondents and White males are more likely to think Blacks are better off relative to Whites, all else equal. Older respondents may compare Blacks' current standing relative to Whites to the status gap in previous generations, thus rating Blacks as slightly richer relative to Whites than young respondents, who have a different reference point. The base model further reveals that more educated respondents tend to rate Blacks as slightly worse off, consistent with my expectation that evaluations of Blacks as poorer relative to Whites could be an informed position, not just a stereotype.

Finally, independent voters are likely to see Blacks as richer (mean = 4.24 on the perceptions of BRS scale) than Democratic voters evaluate Blacks (mean = 3.89); but Republican voters do not differ significantly from Democrats (mean = 3.93). Given that Independents tend to be lower-information voters, their higher perceptions of BRS may reflect that they are more sensitive to events such as the election of a Black president.[24] It is also worth noting that the number of Independents in the sample is small (395, compared to 1,051 Democrats and 1,182 Republicans).

24. Philip E. Converse, "Information Flow and the Stability of Partisan Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (1962): 578–599.

Table 5.3: Individual-Level Predictors of Perceptions of BRS

Perceptions of BRS	(1)	(2)
Laziness Stereotype	-0.242***	
	(0.032)	
Racial Resentment		0.0144
		(0.013)
Age	0.00680***	0.00467***
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Gender	-0.126**	-0.101
	(0.060)	(0.065)
Marital Status	0.0214	0.0231
	(0.062)	(0.065)
Education (years)	-0.0455***	-0.0292**
	(0.011)	(0.012)
Income (thousands)	-0.000294	-0.000356
	(0.001)	(0.001)
Independent	0.233***	0.247**
	(0.088)	(0.096)
Republican	0.0987	0.0421
	(0.060)	(0.069)
Constant	5.574***	4.022***
	(0.270)	(0.223)
	(0.270)	(0.223)
Observations	1527	1422
p	1.08e-20	0.000197
R-sq. (within)	0.0356	0.000173
R-sq. (between)	0.123	0.0465
R-sq. (overall)	0.103	0.0257

Standard errors in parentheses; Table reports results of random effects GLS regression; Party base category is Democrat
Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Although caution is merited in claiming that partisanship is wholly irrelevant to Whites' perceptions of Blacks as rich or poor, we can safely conclude that identification as a Democrat or Republican is not a primary determinant of perceptions of BRS among Whites in the GSS sample.

5.2.1 The salience of race and the security of status

I next consider how Whites' perceptions of BRS are predicted by local geography, incorporating measures of context alongside the individual-level variables to offer support for *status perceptions hypothesis 2*.[25] Table 5.4 reveals that while simply living in areas with Blacks that fall into higher income brackets has no significant effect on perceptions of BRS (Models 1 and 3), perceptions of BRS are sensitive to the income rank of Blacks and Whites in a White individual's surroundings. The size of the Black-White income gap has a small but significant negative effect on perceptions of BRS (Model 4). Moving from an MSA with a racial income gap of $19,000 (at the 25th percentile) to one with a more severe disparity of $31,000 (at the 75th percentile) predicts a decrease of 0.12 points on the scale measuring perceptions of BRS (*S.D.* = 1.05), indicating that these perceptions reflect the true standing of Blacks relative to Whites in a given setting.

It is necessary to control for the Black population share to identify the significant effect of the Black-White income gap in Model 4. The income gap variable is insignificant when Black population share is ignored (Model 2), indicating that only among Whites living in settings with a similar racial mix do local income disparities predict perceptions of BRS. This result makes sense given that the smallest income gaps—or the rare instances of Black median income being higher than White median income—are found in MSAs with miniscule Black populations. There is a positive correlation of 0.42 between Black-White income gap and Black population share, indicating that MSAs with a large Black presence tend to have higher income inequality between Blacks and Whites.[26]

Black population share also has its own significant effect on perceptions of BRS—but in the opposite direction. That is, Whites tend to think Blacks are slightly richer as a group in high-density

25. See Appendix B for a discussion of the potential that the laziness stereotype is itself predicted by the Black population share in one's MSA.

26. While this correlation of 0.42 is the highest between any two independent variables, it is not high enough to raise serious concerns of multicollinearity, and the inclusion of both Black population share and Black-White income gap in the model is theoretically motivated by the predictions outlined in the previous chapter.

Table 5.4: Contextual Predictors of Perceptions of BRS: Income and Race

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Perceptions of BRS	Black Income Models		Black Population Models		Segregation Model
Contextual Variables					
Black Med. Household Income (thousands)	0.00118		0.00185		
	(0.002)		(0.003)		
Black-White Income Gap (thousands)		-0.00433		-0.00998***	-0.00630**
		(0.003)		(0.003)	(0.003)
Percent Black (log)			0.119***	0.163***	
			(0.033)	(0.038)	
Segregation (White-Black Exposure)					0.0180**
					(0.007)
Individual-Level Variables					
Laziness Stereotype	-0.246***	-0.247***	-0.246***	-0.249***	-0.248***
	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.034)
Age	0.00572***	0.00571***	0.00611***	0.00622***	0.00618***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Gender	-0.133**	-0.132**	-0.127**	-0.124**	-0.124**
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.061)	(0.062)
Marital Status	0.0114	0.00678	0.00718	-0.00503	-0.00269
	(0.064)	(0.064)	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.064)
Education (years)	-0.0460***	-0.0458***	-0.0463***	-0.0461***	-0.0452***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Income (thousands)	-0.000313	-0.000135	-0.000394	-0.0000283	-0.0000414
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Independent	0.206**	0.213**	0.198**	0.210**	0.206**
	(0.092)	(0.092)	(0.092)	(0.091)	(0.092)
Republican	0.0995	0.0951	0.0946	0.0828	0.0781
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.061)	(0.061)
Constant	5.624***	5.772***	5.343***	5.565***	5.656***
	(0.296)	(0.294)	(0.306)	(0.294)	(0.292)
Observations	1406	1406	1406	1406	1406
p	3.69e-18	1.08e-17	1.43e-20	1.42e-20	1.37e-18
R-sq (within)	0.0363	0.0375	0.0378	0.0403	0.0401
R-sq (between)	0.113	0.114	0.127	0.136	0.121
R-sq (overall)	0.103	0.105	0.115	0.123	0.112

Standard errors in parentheses; Table reports results of random effects GLS regression

Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey; Party base category is Democrat

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Black MSAs, even though there tends to be greater income inequality between Blacks and Whites in such settings. Among areas with the same size Black-White income gap, moving from an MSA that is 4% Black to one that is 17% Black (across the interquartile range) predicts an *increase* of 0.23 in a White individual's perceptions of BRS. This positive effect may reflect the greater likelihood of finding a visible Black middle class in an area with a larger Black population share, even if the median household income does not reflect this; Black population share is negatively correlated with Black median income, although only at -0.05. We gather that areas with larger Black populations may have larger low-income *and* affluent Black communities, and may also be home to wealthier Whites—hence income inequality being greater in these settings.

In any case, the positive effect of Black population share indicates that, holding the Black-White income gap constant, Whites are more likely to perceive a smaller status gap where race is more salient—or, I suggest, where the Black population is more visible.

Segregation and the visibility of race

I further interrogate the relationship between the visibility of a Black population and perceptions of BRS by incorporating racial segregation into the model. Model 5 replaces the Black population share variable with racial segregation to capture the probability a White family shares a neighborhood with a Black family. The segregation variable proves significant ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that Whites perceive a smaller racial status gap in MSAs where there is greater exposure of Whites to Blacks.

The substantive effect of the exposure variable is best understood by comparing locations that are similar in population size and makeup but different in their degrees of segregation.[27] Take, for example, Milwaukee, WI. With a population of about 1.6 million, 17.4% of which is Black, and an exposure score of 5.91, White residents of Milwaukee are relatively unlikely to share a neighborhood with Black family. Model 5 predicts that a White GSS respondent living in a city comparable to Milwaukee, holding all other predictors at their means, would place Blacks at 3.90 on the perceptions of BRS scale. Now imagine somewhere like the West Palm Beach-Boca Raton area:

27. Locations used for examples do not reflect the places of residence of GSS respondents in the sample in order to protect their anonymity. For this example, note that Milwaukee belongs to the Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis MSA, and West Palm Beach-Boca Raton-Boynton Beach, FL is an MD within the larger Miami MSA.

similar to Milwaukee with a population of 1.3 million that is 17.5% Black, but with an exposure score of 10.40. With the other variables held at their means, a White resident of an area comparable to West Palm Beach is predicted to place Blacks at 3.98 on the perceptions of BRS scale.

Segregation measures reflect a number of factors, from the ability of local Black families to move away from isolated Black neighborhoods to an MSA's particular historical pattern of Black-White segregation. As I noted above, there is also a possibility that Black-White income disparities are smaller in less segregated settings, given the role of segregation in concentrating poverty in Black communities and concentrating wealth in White ones. This possibility might lead us to think that higher perceptions of BRS in less segregated MSAs are simply the product of Blacks being relatively better off in such settings. For instance, the income gap between Blacks and Whites is smaller in West Palm Beach (approx. $20,000) than in the more segregated Milwaukee (approx. $35,000). However, the correlation between the segregation measure and the Black-White income gap is only 0.23, suggesting that the patterning of race in an MSA has an influence on perceptions of BRS distinct from any relationship between segregation and racial disparities in household income. Whites' responses to racial contexts may be reflective of objective conditions, but White awareness of a Black population nonetheless contributes to White perceptions of BRS even after we account for the true relative standing of the races in a given metropolitan area.

Taken together, Models 4 and 5 offer evidence for *status threat hypothesis 1*. In settings where race is more salient—whether based on Black population share or residential exposure to Black households—Whites tend to believe that Blacks are richer relative to Whites. Moreover, this effect holds when accounting for the actual Black-White income gap in their MSAs. If we conceive of threat in terms that are more material than affective, my findings so far demonstrate that the logic of racial threat is applicable to the question of whether Whites perceive Blacks to be encroaching on Whites in economic status.

5.2.2 Unemployment and the security of status

Do perceptions of BRS also vary according to economic context, per the economic dimension of the racial threat hypothesis? I investigate this question in Table 5.5. For reference, the first column revisits the model that identified the effects of the Black-White income gap and Black

population share on perceptions of BRS in Table 5.4. Model 2 then incorporates a measure of MSA unemployment rates. Unemployment proves a significant predictor of the outcome variable in the positive direction. Across the interquartile range of unemployment rates—from 4.5% to 7.5%—perceptions of BRS increase by approximately one tenth of a point. In settings where unemployment was highest during the recession, Whites were more likely to think Blacks, if anything, were *improving* in economic standing, despite the heavy weight of the recession borne by Blacks.

Model 3 offers additional evidence for this relationship by accounting for an MSA's starting level of unemployment as of 2006 and measuring the proportional increase: a one-percent increase in the unemployment rate in an MSA is associated with an increase in a White MSA resident's perception of BRS by 0.18. While this effect is borderline significant ($p < 0.10$), taken together with the highly significant effect of absolute levels of unemployment, it demonstrates the robustness of unemployment's effect on perceptions of BRS. It is not surprising that the only significant contextual variable in Model 3 is unemployment, in light of considerable increases in unemployment during the time period in question. Changes in Black population share and Black-White income differential were minimal in most MSAs between 2006 and 2010.[28]

The effect of unemployment is the opposite of what one would expect if perceptions of BRS were a primarily affective orientation toward Blacks that would be more negative (in which case, Whites would evaluate Blacks as poorer) in settings of economic scarcity. Instead, Models 2 and 3 support my conceptualization of perceptions of BRS as responsive to material status threats when economic conditions in Whites' local contexts paint race relations as a zero-sum game: as unemployment increases over the panel, losses suffered by Whites are registered as gains for Blacks. Table 5.5 therefore offers strong evidence for *status threat hypothesis 2*.

Repeating the analysis with unemployment rates disaggregated by race produces almost identical results. This is an expected finding, as the rates by race are almost perfectly correlated—but it indicates that perceptions of BRS were increasing as both Whites and Blacks were losing jobs. In no MSA in the sample is the White unemployment rate higher than Black unemployment (the median difference between the two is 7 percentage points) and in less than 10% did this gap narrow

28. Identifying as a Republican becomes significant in Model 3 in Table 5.5. This suggests that Republicans' perceptions of BRS may be more sensitive to contexts of increasing unemployment than Democrats' perceptions of BRS. See Section 5.3.3 below for further discussion of partisanship.

Table 5.5: Contextual Predictors of Perceptions of BRS: Unemployment

Perceptions of BRS	(1) Racial Context Model	(2) Economic Context Model	(3) Dynamic Model
Contextual Variables			
Black-White Income Gap (thousands)	-0.00998*** (0.003)	-0.00864*** (0.003)	
Percent Black (log)	0.163*** (0.038)	0.151*** (0.039)	
Unemployment Rate		0.0320*** (0.011)	
Black-White Income Gap (%Δ)			0.0253 (0.026)
Black Population Share (%Δ)			0.0120 (0.053)
Unemployment Rate (%Δ)			0.182* (0.111)
Individual-Level Variables			
Laziness Stereotype	-0.249*** (0.034)	-0.246*** (0.034)	-0.283*** (0.047)
Age	0.00622*** (0.002)	0.00576*** (0.002)	0.00683*** (0.002)
Gender	-0.124** (0.061)	-0.122** (0.061)	-0.0726 (0.073)
Marital Status	-0.00503 (0.063)	-0.00512 (0.063)	0.0502 (0.075)
Education (years)	-0.0461*** (0.011)	-0.0456*** (0.010)	-0.0480*** (0.013)
Income (thousands)	-0.0000283 (0.001)	0.0000693 (0.001)	-0.000444 (0.001)
Independent	0.210** (0.091)	0.206** (0.092)	0.201* (0.117)
Republican	0.0828 (0.061)	0.0794 (0.061)	0.178** (0.075)
Constant	5.565*** (0.294)	5.354*** (0.300)	5.769*** (0.346)
Observations	1406	1406	775
p	1.42e-20	1.58e-22	9.84e-12
R-sq. (within)	0.0403	0.0484	0.0350
R-sq. (between)	0.136	0.141	0.164
R-sq. (overall)	0.123	0.128	0.136

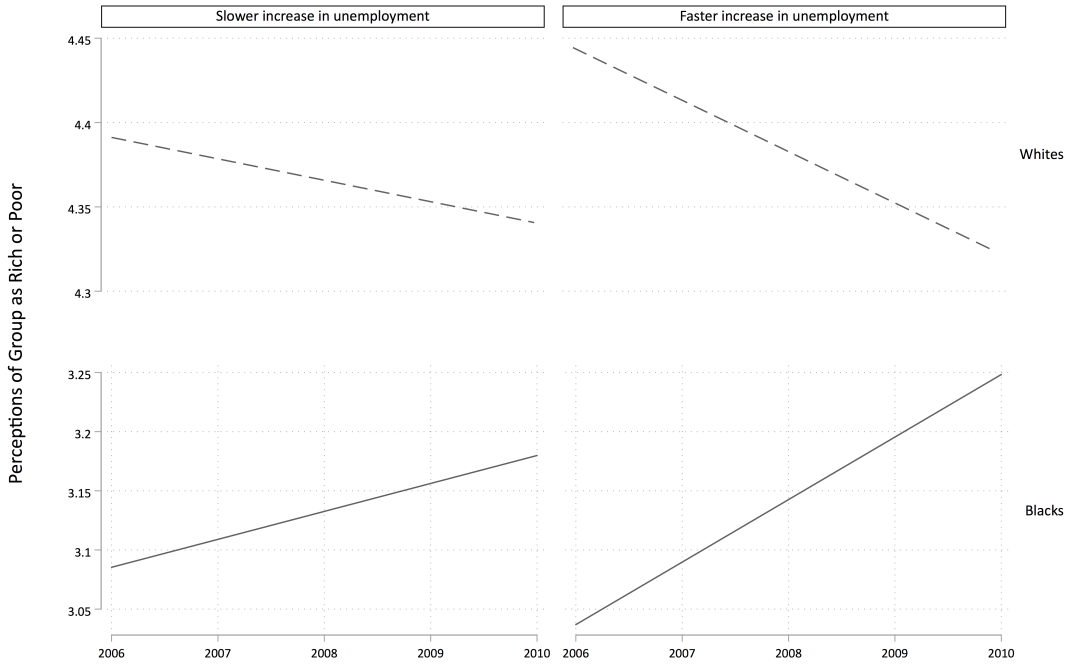
Standard errors in parentheses; Table reports results of random effects GLS regression
Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey; Party base category is Democrat
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

between 2006 and 2010, e.g. in those in areas where White unemployment increased slightly more than Black unemployment. Black unemployment still increased in 99% of cases in the sample.

Whites falling behind, or Blacks catching up?

Figure 5.5 illustrates how the two components of the perceptions of BRS variable—placement of Blacks as well as placement of Whites on the rich/poor spectrum—changed over the course of the panel to produce perceptions of a narrowing status gap between the races in high-unemployment settings. The significance of unemployment in predicting this narrowing, however, comes from perceptions of a rising floor rather than falling ceiling: high unemployment predicts the placement of Blacks closer to "rich" (see Model 1 in Table 5.6), whereas large Black population shares or Black-White income gaps predict the placement of Whites closer to "poor" (Model 2).

Figure 5.5: A Narrowing Perceived Status Gap as Unemployment Rises



Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey (n = 1,769). The figure depicts perceptions that Whites were getting poorer as a group while Blacks were getting richer over the course of the panel. The trend holds across the panel but is exacerbated in settings where unemployment rose more quickly between 2006 and 2010: the graphs on the right depict status perceptions in MSAs where unemployment registered a greater than 60% increase.

In other words, the true income disparity and the salience of race in Whites' surroundings

shape perceptions of BRS by virtue of predicting Whites' evaluations of their *own* economic standing in absolute terms. Alternatively, economic contexts of insecurity are those where Whites are likely to adjust their evaluations of *others'* economic standing in absolute terms, perceiving Blacks to be getting richer in settings of high unemployment. Together, these effects produce the finding that Whites see a smaller status gap between Blacks and Whites in settings where race is salient, and where unemployment is high.

Table 5.6: Contextual Predictors of Blacks and Whites as Rich/Poor

	Blacks Rich/Poor	Whites Rich/Poor
	(1)	(2)
Black-White Income Gap (thousands)	-0.00167	0.00863***
	(0.003)	(0.002)
Percent Black (log)	0.0582*	-0.125***
	(0.031)	(0.031)
Unemployment Rate	0.0276***	-0.0104
	(0.010)	(0.008)
Constant	4.680***	4.266***
	(0.252)	(0.255)
Observations	1407	1410
p	1.82e-18	3.67e-16
R-sq. (within)	0.0369	0.0106
R-sq. (between)	0.0999	0.110
R-sq. (overall)	0.0962	0.0801

Standard errors in parentheses; Table reports results of random effects GLS regression
Party base category is Democrat; For concision, control variables are not displayed
Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

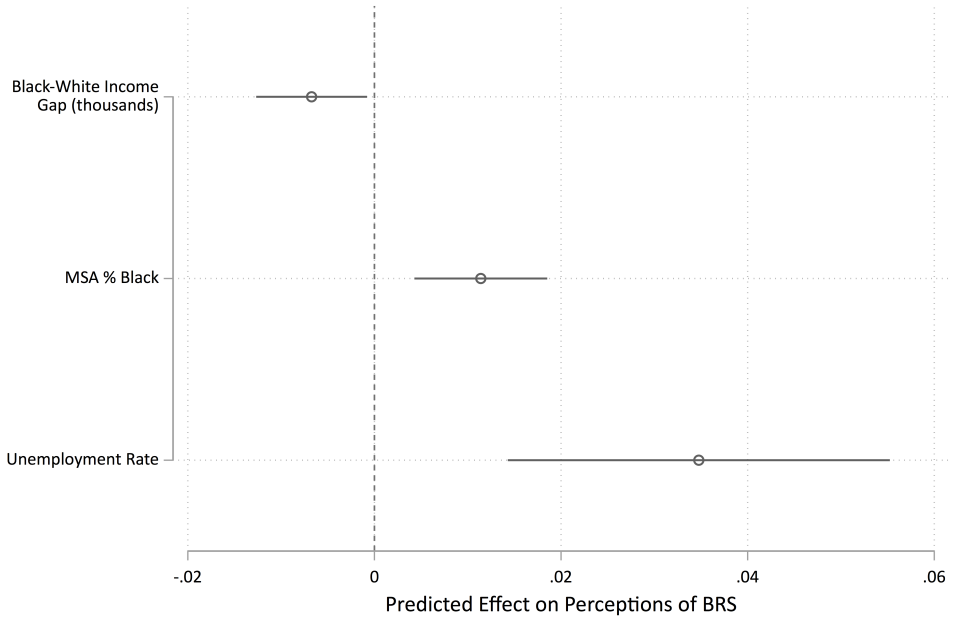
5.2.3 Summary: Contextual variation in perceptions of the racial status gap

The findings reported thus far have offered compelling evidence for the operation of a threat response among White Americans that appears not in the form of greater animus toward Blacks, but rather in the form of perceptions of a narrowing gap between the races in economic status. Figure 5.6 illustrates the key significant relationships that have emerged from my analysis in Section 5.2. I demonstrated that status perceptions might logically reflect realities in Whites surroundings, such as the Black-White income gap: if Blacks are relatively poor in a given MSA, local Whites'

perceptions of BRS are lower. We also saw, however, that perceptions of BRS could reflect more subjective responses to context, as was the case with an MSA's Black population share, or even seemingly illogical responses to material realities, as was the case with unemployment rates.

The irony of Whites perceiving Blacks to have benefitted economically in the MSAs hardest hit by the recession makes sense if we appreciate these as settings where race relations would most likely be cast as a zero-sum game—and remember Whites' protectiveness of their status over Blacks. This analysis challenges the typical association of threat with negative affect directed at Blacks and instead draws attention to the ingroup-oriented dimension of prejudice as a sense of group position. Having established that status perceptions can be conceptualized as a measure of the threat Blacks pose to Whites' interests, the next section interrogates the robustness of my argument.

Figure 5.6: Visualizing Effects of Racial and Economic Context on Perceptions of BRS



Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey (n = 1,406). Figure illustrates results of Model 2 in Table 5.5. Horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

5.2.4 Robustness checks and alternative explanations

The amount of variance in perceptions of BRS explained by the models presented so far is small (the model with the highest R-squared value explains 13.5%). Beliefs about the relative

status of the races are sure to be shaped by factors beyond one's local surroundings and personal characteristics. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify systematic variation in perceptions of BRS according to both racial and economic context. Three additional tests offer further support for my interpretations of the relationship between context and perceptions of BRS.

Individual experiences of unemployment

First, is it simply individuals who are themselves unemployed, or who become unemployed during the panel, who are likely to believe Blacks are getting richer relative to Whites? Including individual-level controls for respondents' current workforce status as unemployed, or for their experience of unemployment in the past ten years, indicates that the predictive power of MSA unemployment rate holds irrespective of individual experiences of unemployment.

Economic mobility

Second, is it simply in places that were stagnant before the recession that Whites are likely to think Blacks are relatively better off? I repeat the analysis including measures of relative economic mobility by MSA, operationalized as the correlation between a parent and child's rank in the income distribution for children born 1980-82.[29] This variable reflects economic opportunity in each MSA preceding the GSS panel, and further, is uncorrelated with unemployment rates. I find that the effects of unemployment rate in predicting perceptions of BRS hold across areas with both lower and higher levels of social mobility.

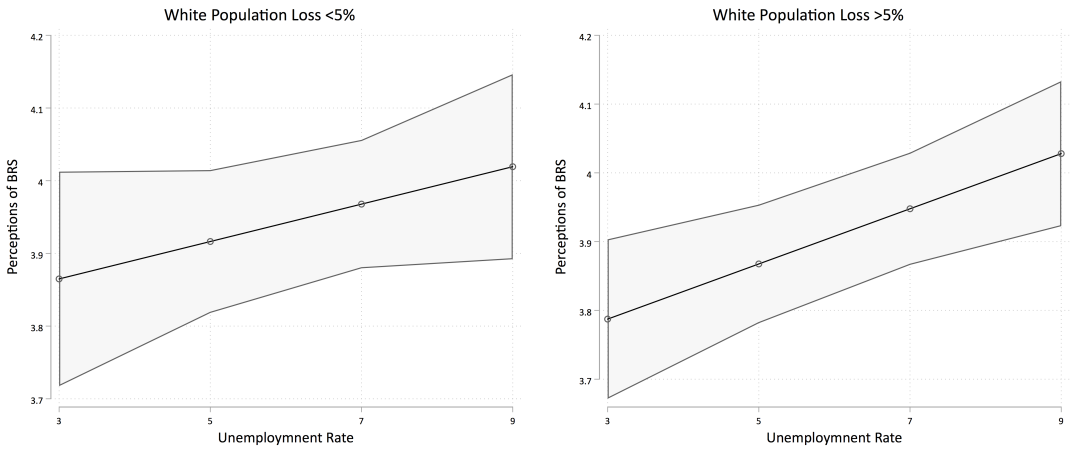
White population loss

Third, if perceptions of BRS approximate Whites' evaluation of the security of their group's position, do non-economic indicators related to the security of White status also predict perceptions of BRS? Following previous work on the relationship between demographic shifts and White insecurity, I incorporate into my models a measure of the change in each MSA's White population

29. Data drawn from Raj Chetty et al., "Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the United States," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129, no. 4 (2014): 1553–1623.

between 2000 and 2010.[30] White population change itself does not predict perceptions of BRS. However, stratifying the sample according to White population change reveals that the statistical significance of the relationship between unemployment rate and perceptions of BRS is greater among Whites in MSAs that saw more than an approximately 5 percentage-point decrease in White population in the last ten years. Examining the two components of the status gap variable separately reveals that, in settings with greater White population loss, Whites saw Blacks as getting richer (rather than Whites getting poorer) as unemployment rose.

Figure 5.7: Greater Significance of Unemployment Where White Population Declining



Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey. The figure depicts the marginal effect of local unemployment rates on perceptions of BRS among Whites who fall into the top or bottom half of the sample according to the change in their MSAs' White population shares from 2000 to 2010. Confidence intervals are shaded for emphasis.

Figure 5.7 illustrates the marginal effect of unemployment on perceptions of BRS when the sample is stratified according to recent change in White population. Future work should more closely investigate the relationship between White population change and status perceptions, but these preliminary findings support the interpretation that White insecurity about their racial ingroup is behind the effects I have identified above.

30. See, for example, Hopkins, "Politicized Places: Explaining Where and When Immigrants Provoke Local Opposition."

5.3 Two Dimensions of Affirmative Action Preferences

In Chapter 4, I characterized affirmative action as distinct from other racialized policies that are implicitly posed as threatening to Whites: affirmative action "[makes] whiteness both visible and a salient category of identification," to use Gallagher's words.[31] It therefore offers an opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of perceiving a status threat to Whites' racial policy preferences. And, because affirmative action highlights ingroup-oriented concerns about the security of Whites' position but still involves consideration of Blacks' worthiness as beneficiaries, it further offers an opportunity to highlight the complexity of racialized policy preferences as informed by both ingroup- and outgroup-oriented considerations. These are the goals of the final section of this chapter.

I begin by discussing affirmative action as redistribution *from* Whites that will draw greater opposition among Whites who feel their status is less secure. I then discuss affirmative action as redistribution *to* Blacks, and show that perceiving a status threat only comes into play as a significant consideration in settings where Blacks are likely to be considered as deserving beneficiaries of affirmative action in the first place.

5.3.1 Affirmative action as redistribution from Whites

I first confirm that racial resentment is a more relevant measure of racial animus than the laziness stereotype in predicting opposition to affirmative action (Models 1 and 2 in Table 5.7). Model 3 next demonstrates that the perceptions of BRS variable is a significant predictor of affirmative action alongside partisanship and racial resentment. It remains significant when I control for individual-level fixed effects in Model 4, a linear probability model using a binary coding of the outcome variable (oppose affirmative action = 1, support affirmative action = 0).

Using linear models with binary outcomes is often avoided due to the inherent nonlinearity of the relationship between predictor variables and a binary outcome. There is also the possibility that, at the extreme, a linear model can produce probabilities above 1 or below 0. However, a linear model allows me to retain more observations, as opposed to losing a large portion of the

31. Gallagher, "Transforming Racial Identity Through Affirmative Action," 154.

sample when binary logistic regression is used to add fixed effects. Binary logit models also bring their own uncertainty depending on the location of a particular observation on the estimated logit curve. Finally, the evidence provided for the significance of perceptions of BRS in the random effects model supports my use of a linear fixed effects model to ensure that this significance holds when accounting for unobserved individual-level factors. The status perceptions variable is the only predictor that remains significant in the fixed effects model, indicating that variation in a White individual's perceptions of BRS over the course of the panel is predictive of that individual's affirmative action views.[32] I further confirm that it is perceptions of *relative* status that predict affirmative action preferences: whether a White individual thinks Blacks are rich or poor is insignificant (Model 5) if we do not account for where that individual also ranks Whites. These findings offer compelling support for *affirmative action hypothesis 1*.

The implications of Model 1 are best understood in terms of predicted probabilities, which also helps keep the effects of perceptions of BRS in perspective. A standard deviation increase in racial resentment (2.37) predicts an approximately 16 percentage-point increase in the likelihood that someone strongly opposes affirmative action, holding all other variables at their means. Comparing a Democrat to a Republican predicts a 14 percentage-point increase in the same likelihood. By contrast, an increase in perceptions of BRS of one standard deviation (1.05) represents an approximately 2.5 percentage-point increase in the likelihood of strong opposition. Figure 5.8 visually compares these effect sizes. The degree to which a White individual perceives a status threat does not outweigh the effects of partisanship and racial attitudes. However, given the typical focus on the latter two variables in discussing affirmative action preferences, it is valuable to appreciate a previously unrecognized predictor of affirmative action preferences.

Ultimately, this analysis does not seek to offer a new primary explanation for why Whites oppose affirmative action. It instead expands our understanding of the group interest framework beyond explaining how Whites use racial or nonracial ideologies to justify their policy preferences. I offer evidence for the operation of group interests on material economic grounds by revealing that a descriptive (rather than normative) evaluation—Whites' perceptions of the economic distance

32. While there is some individual-level variation in racial resentment over the panel, this variation is not predictive of affirmative action views—furthermore, contextual measures of Black population share, unemployment rate, and White population change do not predict levels of racial resentment (as they predicted perceptions of BRS).

Table 5.7: Individual-Level Predictors of Affirmative Action Preferences

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Opposition to AA	Random Effects	Random Effects	Random Effects	Fixed Effects	Random Effects
Laziness Stereotype	1.101				
	(0.089)				
Racial Resentment		1.566***	1.559***	1.007	1.562***
		(0.065)	(0.064)	(0.006)	(0.065)
Perceptions of BRS			1.182**	1.029***	
			(0.093)	(0.010)	
Perceptions of Blacks' Absolute Status					1.140
					(0.102)
Age	0.991	0.989*	0.989*	0.994	0.990
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Gender	1.459*	1.305	1.365		1.344
	(0.320)	(0.267)	(0.281)		(0.276)
Marital Status	1.158	0.851	0.872	1.003	0.877
	(0.246)	(0.172)	(0.177)	(0.039)	(0.178)
Education (years)	0.947	0.997	1.005	0.989	1.004
	(0.036)	(0.038)	(0.038)	(0.010)	(0.038)
Income (thousands)	1.000	1.002	1.002	1.000	1.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.002)
Independent	1.870**	1.655*	1.575	0.949	1.597
	(0.530)	(0.472)	(0.450)	(0.039)	(0.456)
Republican	3.804***	2.642***	2.662***	0.997	2.647***
	(0.824)	(0.557)	(0.564)	(0.042)	(0.560)
Constant				3.268***	
				(0.790)	
Cut 1	0.00939***	0.138***	0.296		0.247*
	(0.008)	(0.097)	(0.226)		(0.191)
Cut 2	0.0473***	0.706	1.515		1.259
	(0.038)	(0.487)	(1.144)		(0.960)
Cut 3	0.703	10.58***	22.69***		18.74***
	(0.556)	(7.282)	(17.256)		(14.356)
Observations	1492	1396	1389	1389	1389
Log likelihood	-1369.7	-1216.0	-1205.7	573.6	-1206.9
Adj. R-sq.				0.5765	

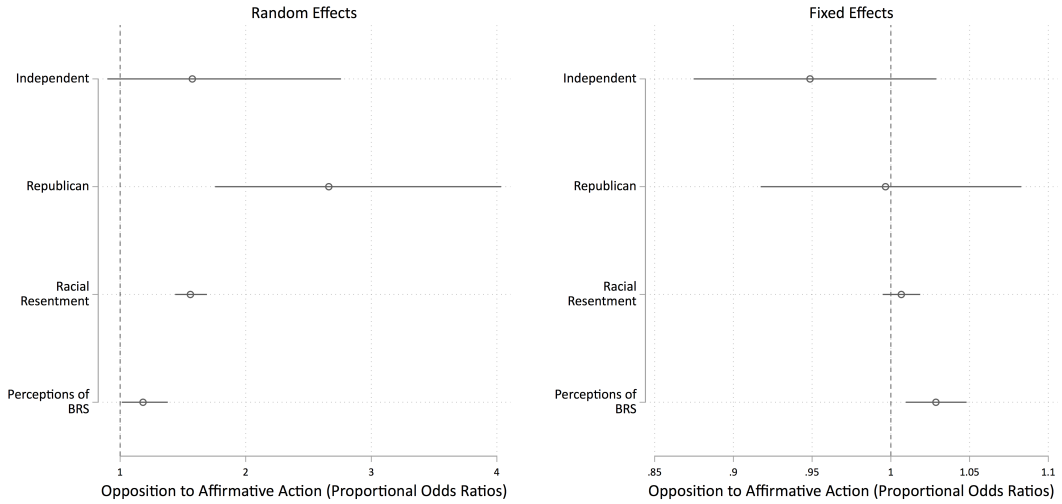
Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; Party base category is Democrat

Table reports odds ratios from random-effects ordered logistic regression, with the exception of Model 3, which reports (exponentiated) coefficients from linear probability model including fixed effects

Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure 5.8: Visualizing Effects of Status Perceptions on Affirmative Action Preferences



Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey (n = 1,389). Figure on left illustrates results of Model 3 in Table 5.7. Figure on right illustrates results of Model 4 in Table 5.7. Horizontal lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

between Blacks and Whites—has a small but significant influence in raising or lowering opposition in a policy area on which White attitudes tend to be firmly decided.

Moreover, the analysis presented in Section 5.2 above demonstrated the capacity for Whites to adjust their perceptions of the status gap between Blacks and Whites in response to changing material circumstances. Whereas partisanship or racial resentment are unlikely to shift considerably over the course of a few years, the significance of perceptions of BRS in the fixed effects model presented above highlights a more variable factor that, at the margin, helps explain why Whites would change their opinions on "sticky" issues like affirmative action.

5.3.2 Affirmative action as redistribution to Blacks

I have argued that perceptions of BRS affect views on affirmative action by virtue of signaling the relative security or insecurity of Whites' economic position—a consideration distinct from the deservingness of Black beneficiaries. My final analyses interrogate my conjecture that perceiving a geographic-based status threat will impact affirmative action views in settings where Whites are not already predisposed to oppose redistributing employment opportunities to a local Black community perceived to be undeserving. I test *affirmative action hypothesis 2* in two steps.

The first step is to demonstrate the significance of an MSA's Black median household income in predicting variation in affirmative action views held by local Whites—reported in Model 1 in Table 5.8. In Model 2, Black median household income remains marginally significant ($p < 0.10$) when incorporating individual fixed effects.[33] Note that these models also control for the MSA's Black population share. Although this variable itself was a predictor of perceptions of BRS, I judge it appropriate to include because it has a relatively small effect in predicting BRS, proves to not be a significant predictor of affirmative action views, and allows for comparison among Whites with similar lived experiences of racial diversity.

In Model 3 of Table 5.8, I further demonstrate that the predictive power of Black income does not merely reflect lower opposition to affirmative action in settings where Whites themselves have higher incomes. Model 3 finds that an MSA's median White household income, although correlated to the median Black income at 0.71, is not on its own predictive of affirmative action views. This finding supports a conceptualization of Black median household income as a proxy for the extent to which a Black population will be seen as lower-status and thus less deserving, as opposed to appearing more "respectable." My findings therefore show that Whites are more supportive of affirmative action in MSAs where they are less likely to see images associated with negative views of Blacks as undeserving beneficiaries.

As in my individual-level models of affirmative action preferences, the effect I identify upon adding context explains only a small amount of variation in affirmative action views. For a standard deviation change in median Black household income ($11,000)—or, comparing otherwise identical individuals who live in MSAs where median Black income is either $30,000 or $41,000—the difference in one's probability of strongly opposing affirmative action is only about 3 percentage points. However, I go on to investigate whether the predictive power of Black median income offers the potential to identify the settings in which perceptions of BRS are most relevant to views on affirmative action.

33. A Hausman test indicates that a model with fixed effects at the individual level would be more appropriate than a random effects model to explain variation in affirmative action when including median household income in the model. However, there are theoretical (i.e. the importance of between-MSA variation) and empirical (i.e. the limits of the test) and reasons why random effects modeling is useful as well. To elaborate on the latter: the Hausman test requires use of the binary coding of the dependent variable because fixed effects cannot be included in ordered logistic regression. As a result, the Hausman pronounces a verdict on a model in which a considerable amount of variation in the original outcome variable has been lost.

Table 5.8: Status Perceptions, Context, and Affirmative Action Preferences

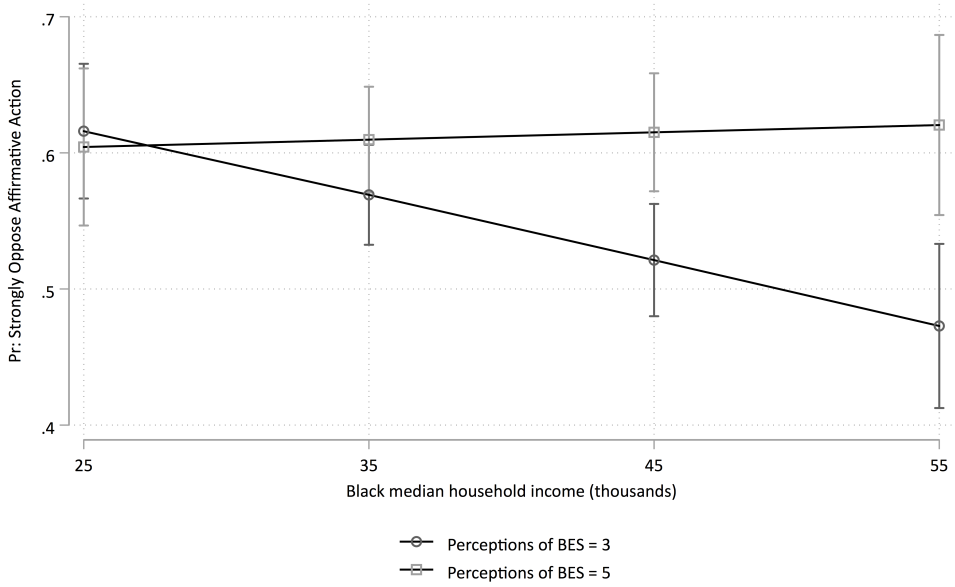
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Opposition to AA	Random Effects	Fixed Effects	Random Effects	Random Effects
Contextual Variables				
Percent Black (log)	0.962	1.015	0.942	0.966
	(0.102)	(0.055)	(0.087)	(0.103)
Black Med. Household	0.981**	0.998*		0.912***
Income (thousands)	(0.008)	(0.001)		(0.027)
White Med. Household			0.995	
Income (thousands)			(0.008)	
Perceptions of BRS				1.019**
× Med. Black Income				(0.008)
Individual-Level Variables				
Perceptions of BRS	1.230**	1.033***	1.186**	0.592*
	(0.101)	(0.011)	(0.093)	(0.175)
Racial Resentment	1.573***	1.007	1.557***	1.590***
	(0.067)	(0.007)	(0.065)	(0.069)
Age	0.989*	0.994	0.989*	0.989*
	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Gender	1.441*		1.367	1.472*
	(0.300)		(0.282)	(0.307)
Marital Status	0.883	1.009	0.865	0.832
	(0.183)	(0.033)	(0.176)	(0.174)
Education (years)	1.018	0.989	1.008	1.026
	(0.039)	(0.010)	(0.039)	(0.040)
Income (thousands)	1.002	1.000	1.002	1.002
	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Independent	1.719*	0.965	1.582	1.714*
	(0.518)	(0.033)	(0.454)	(0.517)
Republican	2.435***	1.035	2.654***	2.456***
	(0.527)	(0.042)	(0.564)	(0.533)
Observations	1279	1279	1389	1279
Log likelihood	-1113.5		-1205.0	-1110.2
Adj. R-sq.		0.5987		

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses; Party base category is Democrat
Table reports odds ratios from random-effects ordered logistic regression, with the exception of Model 2, which reports (exponentiated) coefficients from linear probability model including fixed effects
Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

The greater significance of perceiving a status threat as Black incomes increase

The final model in Table 5.8 poses an interaction between a White individual's perceptions of BRS and the Black median household income in that person's surroundings.[34] The interaction proves significant ($p < 0.05$) and is visualized in Figure 5.9. We know that affirmative action is opposed by most Whites. In settings where Black households are lower-income in absolute terms, it is unlikely that Whites will reduce their opposition to affirmative action even if they do not perceive Blacks to be encroaching on Whites in economic standing. But, if the stigma of poverty associated with Blacks in one's local surroundings is minimal, then whether or not a White individual perceives a status threat will be more influential. Accordingly, Whites with low perceptions of BRS (who think Blacks do not pose a status threat) are more supportive of affirmative action in settings with higher Black incomes.

Figure 5.9: Opposition to Affirmative Action in MSAs with Low- and High-Status Black Populations



Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey (n = 1,279). Figure illustrates interaction between a White individual's perceptions of BRS and the median Black household income in that individual's MSA (Model 4 in Table 5.8)

The interaction term also implies that Whites with high perceptions of BRS (who think Blacks

34. Note that I report only the results of analysis capturing random effects rather than models with fixed effects at the individual level. This decision is motivated by the insignificance of context when fixed effects are included—to be expected when, over only three waves of the panel, there are few respondents for whom perceptions of BRS *and* contextual Black income both meaningfully change.

do pose a status threat) are even more likely to oppose affirmative action in high Black income settings, perhaps seeing Blacks' absolute status in their surroundings as confirmation of the perception that Blacks are relatively well off compared to Whites. However, the interaction effect is driven primarily by those who think Blacks are poor relative to Whites, as illustrated by Figure 5.9. Predicted probabilities indicate that a White individual placed at 3 on the perceptions of BRS scale, holding the other variables at their means, has an approximately 10 percentage-point decrease in the probability of strongly opposing affirmative action as Black household income increases from $30,000 to $50,000 (see Table 5.9). Someone placed at 5 on the perceptions of BRS scale, on the other hand, has only about a one percentage-point increase in the probability of strong opposition across the same range of Black income (a difference that is not statistically significant).

It could be the case that Whites who are less opposed to affirmative action select into metropolitan areas where Black incomes are higher. These could be areas that are higher-status in general, raising the possibility that it is simply in higher-status settings that White opposition to racial policies is reduced (in line with some previous studies).[35] However, neither having a higher income oneself nor living in an MSA with a higher median White household income is predictive of views on affirmative action, meaning that Whites who favor affirmative action would have to select MSAs based on Black income for self-selection to bias my results. It seems unlikely that this is the case. What could instead be at play, however, is that Whites who are less opposed to affirmative action select into more *integrated* metropolitan areas—where the negative effects of segregation have been minimized and Black incomes are higher as a result.

Although it is hard to eliminate the possible influence of self-selection, the fact that median Black income remains a moderately significant predictor of affirmative action views when individual-level fixed effects are included adds more confidence to my argument. Opposition to affirmative action is attenuated among Whites who believe that Blacks do not pose a status threat *and* who live near higher-income Blacks—with the latter condition being necessary for concerns about Blacks' economic distance from Whites to reveal their influence.

35. E.g. Oliver and Mendelberg, "Reconsidering the Environmental Determinants of White Racial Attitudes"; Branton and Jones, "Reexamining Racial Attitudes: The Conditional Relationship between Diversity and Socioeconomic Environment."

Table 5.9: Predicted Probabilities of Strongly Opposing Affirmative Action

	Perceptions of BRS (0-10 Scale)				
Median Black Household Income	5th percentile BRS = 2.5	25th percentile BRS = 3	50th percentile BRS = 4	75th percentile BRS = 5	95th percentile BRS = 6
$30,000/year	0.589	0.593	0.600	0.607	0.614
	(0.026)	(0.021)	(0.018)	(0.024)	(0.034)
$40,000/year	0.528	0.545	0.579	0.612	0.645
	(0.023)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.019)	(0.027)
$50,000/year	0.466	0.497	0.558	0.618	0.674
	(0.031)	(0.025)	(0.021)	(0.027)	(0.038)

Predicted probabilities from ordered logistic regression are reported; all other variables held at their means.
Standard errors in parentheses.

5.3.3 Robustness checks and alternative explanations

To conclude the chapter, I interrogate the robustness of my affirmative action models as I did with my models of perceptions of BRS. I briefly consider how the above results intersect with partisanship before discussing the results of a replication of my analysis using different measures, but drawing on similar concepts, in the ANES.

Partisanship

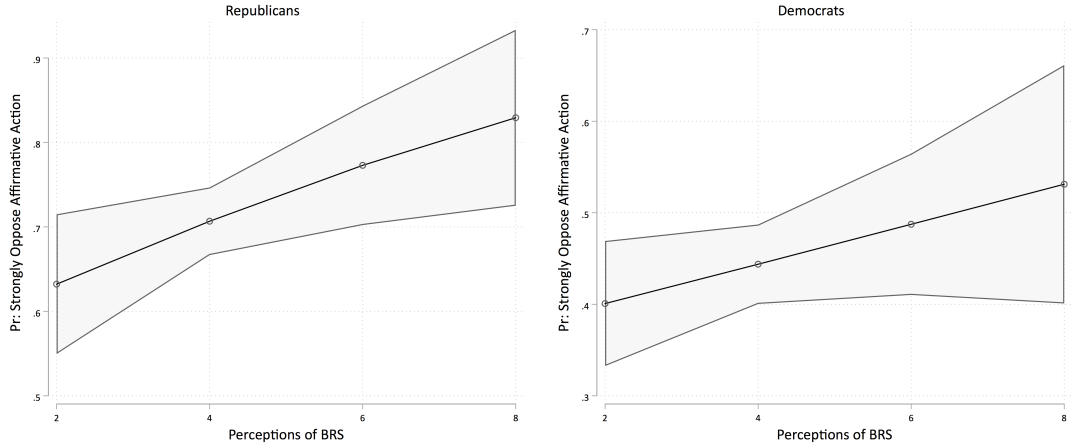
Party identification had no clear role in predicting perceptions of BRS—but is it possible that the relationship between racial evaluations and affirmative action preferences is more variable for Republicans than Democrats, as was the case for the relationship between traditional prejudice and welfare preferences in Part I (Section 3.2.2)?

Stratifying the sample according to party identification reveals that status perceptions have the strongest effect on affirmative action views among Republicans, who are typically associated with the firmest opposition to affirmative action. Figure 5.10 illustrates the greater significance and steeper slope of the relationship between Republicans' perceptions of BRS and affirmative action preferences. The linear model predicts a 3.6 percentage-point change in the probability of opposing affirmative action for a change of 1 point on the perceptions of BRS scale among Republicans, compared to a 2.3 percentage-point change among Democrats.

These findings resonate with Charles Taber and Milton Lodge's argument that people who

feel strongest about an issue are most susceptible to strengthening their position on that issue "in ways not warranted by the evidence."[36] High unemployment rates do not "warrant" an increased evaluation of Blacks' economic status—but this response nonetheless goes on to predict greater opposition to affirmative action, particularly among Republicans.

Figure 5.10: Greater Significance of Status Perceptions on Republican Opposition to Affirmative Action



Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey. The figure depicts the marginal effect of perceptions of BRS on the probability of strongly opposing affirmative action among Republicans (n = 637) and Democrats (n = 597). Confidence intervals are shaded for emphasis.

Replication with the ANES: The relative influence of Blacks in politics

A final test of the arguments presented in this chapter comes from the replication of my analysis using data from the 2016 ANES. I take advantage of a set of questions on the ANES that ask respondents whether Blacks and Whites have too much, the right amount, or too little influence in American politics. Perceptions of a group's political influence obviously diverge from this chapter's central focus on economic status. Yet, views of how influential Blacks are in comparison to Whites offer a different avenue for investigating the same theme driving this chapter so far: the perceived security of Whites' position over Blacks, whether in terms of political or economic power.

Because the 2016 ANES surveys opinion about race-conscious university admissions, I shift focus to affirmative action in education in the replication study. This shift is arguably complementary to the shift I make from economic status to political influence, given that the politics

36. Taber and Lodge, "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs," 756.

of affirmative action have been more contentious in regard to university admissions than hiring and promotion. Leaving behind a focus on employment, however, leads me to limit my analysis to how perceptions of Black influence vary across racial contexts, rather than economic contexts.

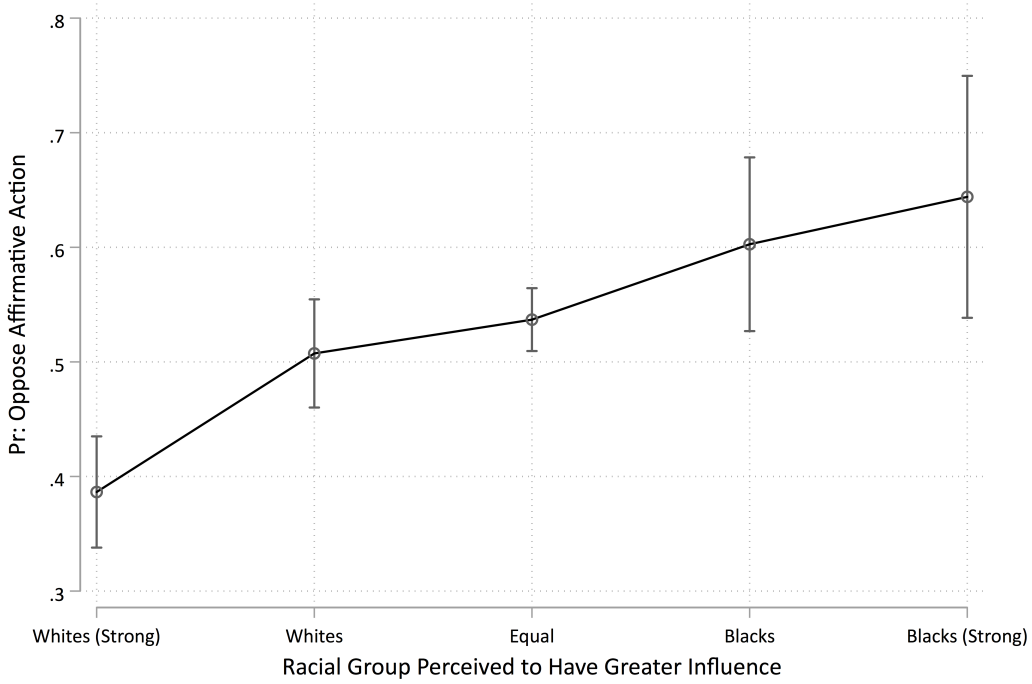
The full results of this replication analysis are reported in Appendix C. My primary finding is that perceptions of Blacks' relative political influence operate according to a similar logic as perceptions of BRS. First, Blacks are perceived to be relatively more influential in congressional districts and states with larger Black population shares. As was the case with perceptions of BRS, it seems that perceptions of Black influence reflect the material realities of Whites' local contexts as well as the subjectivity of Whites' interpretations of those contexts.

Second, I identify that Whites who perceive a smaller disparity in political influence between Blacks and Whites are more likely to oppose affirmative action, all else equal. This finding mirrors the trend in the GSS panel of Whites who perceive a smaller gap between Blacks and Whites in economic status being more likely to oppose affirmative action. The ANES further offers new insight into a key distinction—between Whites who see their group as much more influential than Blacks, and Whites who recognize only a small advantage for their group. As illustrated in Figure 5.11, Whites in the former category stand out as the most likely to support affirmative action.

As discussed in the appendix, there are limits to conducting a pure replication of the analysis presented earlier in this chapter using the ANES. In particular, believing that Blacks have more influence in politics (albeit at the national level, per the ANES question's framing) may be a more logical conclusion to draw from greater exposure to a nearby Black population than the conclusion that Blacks are richer relative to Whites. The belief that Blacks have "too much" power is also liable to blur with racial resentment, which I have shown is not the case with status perceptions.

All the same, my findings with perceptions of Black influence across racial contexts lend support to my conceptualization of status perceptions as a proxy for the perceived security of Whites' position of relative privilege and power over Blacks. The replication study further emphasizes the benefits of an approach that centers Whites' defensiveness of their group position in explaining White opposition to racial policies. Finally, in revealing nuance among Whites who characterize their racial group as either strongly or minimally politically advantaged, my analysis offers directions for future research on the implications of Whites recognizing their own privilege.

Figure 5.11: Opposition to Affirmative Action as Perceptions of Blacks' Influence Increase



Source: 2016 ANES Time Series Study (n = 2,435). Figure visualizes relationship between White perceptions of Blacks' relative influence (when coded as a categorical variable) and the probability of opposition to affirmative action.

5.4 Conclusion to Part II

The analysis presented in this chapter has suggested two seemingly contradictory consequences associated with Black economic advancement. On the one hand, my analysis supports the conventional expectation that improvements in Blacks' *absolute* status will fight the image of Blacks as undeserving beneficiaries. On the other hand, my findings indicate that improvements in Blacks' economic status *relative* to Whites' status will heighten the status threat posed by Blacks, and thus increase opposition to affirmative action. The subjective dimension of this threat becomes clear when we appreciate that, while perceptions of BRS reflect the true Black-White income disparity in a given metropolitan area, they are also predicted by the local salience of race and local economic insecurity.

Taken together, my findings suggest that White opposition to affirmative action is minimized in settings that would fall into the top right quadrant in Table 5.10. This would be a metropolitan area

where a Black community is seen as "respectable" by virtue of being higher-status in absolute terms, but also where Whites' advantage over Blacks feels secure: either because White incomes are considerably higher than Black incomes, the Black community is not too large, or economic anxiety is not too high.

Table 5.10: Blacks' Relative vs. Absolute Status: A Matrix of Status Threat × Black Income

		Black Household Income *(Absolute Status of Blacks)*	
		Low	High
Status Threat *(Perceived Relative Status of Blacks)*	Low		
	High		

This table illustrates possible combinations of (a) the status threat a White individual perceives, predicted by both individual-level and contextual factors; and (b) the Black household income in that White individual's surroundings. Whites who fall into the top right quadrant would be most likely to lower their opposition to affirmative action, seeing Blacks as deserving beneficiaries who do not pose a threat to Whites' status.

One example of a setting that would fall into the top right quadrant is the San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA metropolitan area, where Blacks make up only 3.2% of the population and have a median household income around $55,300—above the national median income, but considerably lower than the White median household income in San Jose of $94,700.[37] In the San Jose area, the minimal salience of the Black population combined with the nearly $40,000 gap between Black and White incomes would make Whites in this setting unlikely to perceive a status threat from Blacks. In tandem with the likelihood that these Whites would view the small local Black community as a relatively "respectable" and affluent one, San Jose Whites would be less likely to oppose affirmative action than their counterparts in an MSA that has a larger and poorer Black population, or an MSA where Whites have a less comfortable advantage over Blacks. Granted, Whites would likely have perceived a narrowing status gap as San Jose moved from an unemployment rate of 4.5% in 2006 to 10.4% in 2010. White residents would therefore have been more likely to oppose affirmative action in 2010 than they were in 2006.

37. All statistics drawn from the 2010 ACS 5-Year Data.

We could also compare San Jose to a place like the Washington, DC metropolitan area, which has a similar Black-White income gap at around $40,000, and even more affluence among its Black and White populations (with a median White household income of just over $102,000 and a median Black household income of $61,800). But Washington is home to a larger Black population—27.3% of its population. In a place where race is considerably more salient, White Washington residents would be more likely than Whites in San Jose to perceive a small status gap between Blacks and Whites, edging Washington toward the bottom right quadrant of Table 5.10. Whites in Washington would thus be more likely to oppose affirmative action than Whites in San Jose. At the same time, a smaller increase in unemployment in Washington between 2006 and 2010 would likely not have exacerbated the perception of a status threat over the recession, as would have been the case in San Jose.

A final example comes from comparing Washington to a place like the metropolitan area around Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN (the Twin Cities). Again, the income disparity between Whites and Blacks is large, around $40,000. But the median White household income is $69,800, compared to a median Black household income of $29,000. The area's Black population is smaller than in Washington, at only 8.7%, meaning Whites in the Twin Cities are likely to be less aware of this Black population. The Twin Cities also saw a smaller increase in unemployment than San Jose between 2006 and 2010. While these factors may make the Minnesotan Whites less likely to perceive a status threat from Blacks, the Black population in their surroundings is low status in absolute terms, with a median income falling into the bottom quartile nationwide. Thus, the Twin Cities would fall into the top left quadrant in Table 5.10. Even the Minnesotan Whites who do not perceive a status threat from Blacks would be unlikely to support affirmative action than their White counterparts in areas where images of "undeserving," low-status Blacks are less salient.

A crucial point in regard to all the above examples is that they explain how material conditions shape White opinions based on my theorization of how these conditions will be *perceived* by Whites. I have shown that Whites draw on their surroundings in some straightforward ways, for example when they perceived status gaps that are in line with the true Black-White income gap in a given MSA. However, my results also shine light on the power of perception to be deeply racialized. Although status perceptions reflect objective realities in Whites' local geographies,

symbolic politics are inevitably at play when economic insecurity predicts where Blacks are seen to be catching up over the course of a recession that widened racial disparities.

Ultimately, this analysis expands our understanding of "threat" beyond the fear, suspicion, or dislike of an outgroup by identifying a threat response rooted in Whites' defensiveness of their ingroup's privileged position. By making this argument through a focus on material conditions, my analysis has further demonstrated that the possible effects of a status threat hold across the spectrum of political ideology and racial attitudes.

I have cautioned that perceptions of BRS are surely influenced by sources not identified in this analysis; that the effect of status perceptions on affirmative action preferences is significant, but small; and that this analysis captures geographic variation in attitudes rather than the "effects" of geography. Nonetheless, Part II envisages a winding road ahead as America makes slow progress in rectifying centuries-old disparities between Blacks and Whites. The results presented here have the potential to inform that path: for example, greater civic education about the extent to which Blacks remain disadvantaged compared to Whites might dampen policy opposition motivated by beliefs to the contrary. All the same, we should expect defensiveness from Whites as they see their racial privilege dissipate.

Part III

The View from the Top: How Whites Maintain the Racial Order in a Louisiana City

Introduction to Part III

Although Baton Rouge is the state capital of Louisiana, locals will tell you that it feels more like a big small town than a small big city. With a sprawled, suburban population of 800,000 people across 4,000 square miles, the greater Baton Rouge area seems content to be known for family, faith, and, most importantly, football.

To be fair, this lack of cultural distinctiveness—in comparison to Cajun country in Lafayette, or the Creole and cosmopolitan New Orleans—lent Baton Rouge to my cause. It could be one of dozens of other American cities that are cleanly divided into Black and White, poor and rich, north and south.

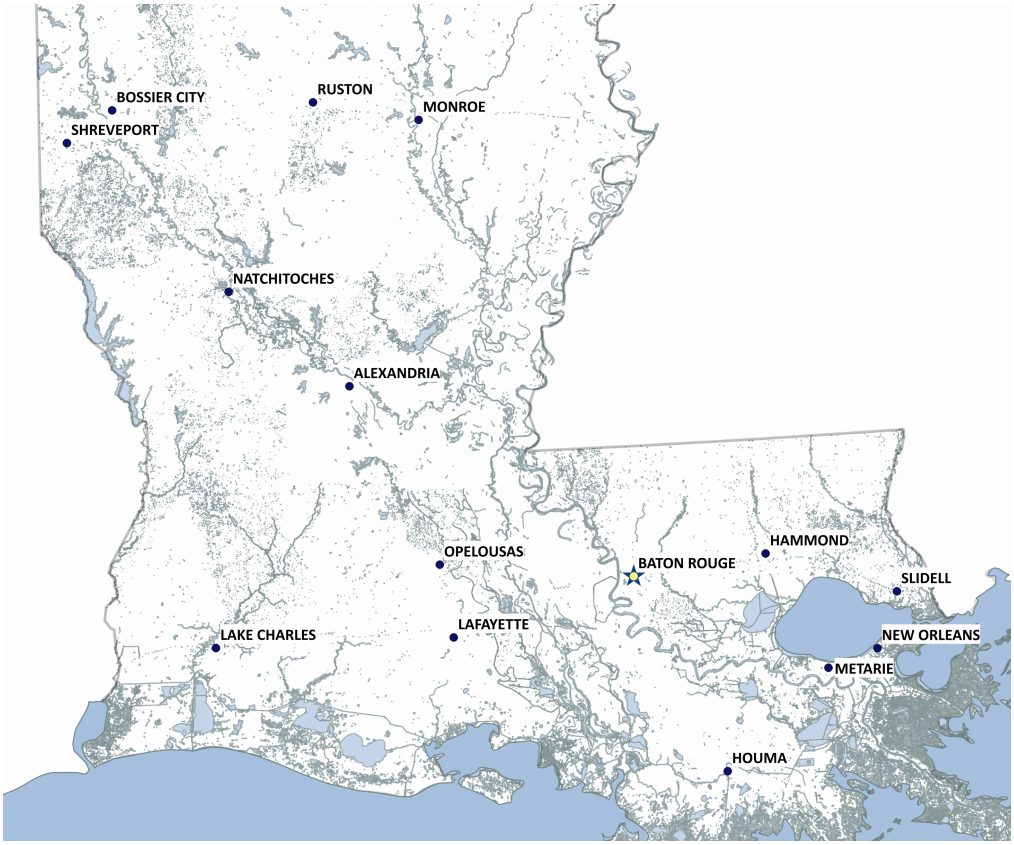
What crucially motivates my study of Baton Rouge, however, is an effort that has unfolded over the past several years: an initiative by residents of the unincorporated parts of East Baton Rouge Parish to break away from the current consolidated city-parish governance structure and incorporate a new municipality, to be called St. George. Leaders of the effort have made clear that their top priority is to create a new, independent school district for residents of the southeastern part of the parish.[38]

For anyone familiar with Baton Rouge's troubled history as home to the longest school desegregation lawsuit in the country, the St. George effort raises a red flag. If incorporated, St. George would be one of the richest and Whitest cities (and school districts) in Louisiana, severing its existing ties with the city of Baton Rouge and the larger East Baton Rouge School District—both of which are majority Black and disproportionately impoverished.

In Part III of this thesis, I take a deep dive into the particular local context of Baton Rouge, the setting for the racialized debate over St. George. This deep dive requires a methodological shift from Parts I and II: whereas the previous case studies used survey data to analyze the relationship

38. A vestige of French church-based rule, Louisiana is the only state to call its local governmental units parishes rather than counties.

Figure 6.0: Map of Louisiana



Map made in QGIS using Census TIGER/Line shapefiles.

between Whites' attitudes and local contexts at the aggregate level, Part III draws on qualitative interview data to analyze Whites' attitudes in a single place.

To be sure, the methodological approach of Parts I and II offered crucial insight. Analysis at the aggregate level enabled me to challenge and expand the racial threat hypothesis through my identification of polarized, racialized policy preferences in the presence of a geographic threat—or, more accurately, in the presence of contextual cues that either activated Whites' existing predispositions toward Blacks (in Part I), or made Whites more defensive of their place in the racial hierarchy (in Part II). Both studies also illustrated the duality of prejudice, supporting my re-articulation of Blumer's classic conceptualization of prejudice as a sense of group position. Whites' position as dominant group is associated with negative feelings directed toward Blacks as an outgroup (leading to racial animus), as well as positive feelings directed toward Whites' own ingroup (leading to the defense of Whites' privileges).

What quantitative analysis at the aggregate level cannot show, however, is what Whites' racialized preferences look like in practice. This is the contribution of Part III. Beyond analyzing preferences as they are expressed on surveys and as they vary systematically across contexts, Part III will demonstrate: first, how Whites' preferences are contextualized by a specific, local world; second, how these preferences are revealed and rationalized in ordinary conversation; and third, how Whites' preferences reveal the constraints of their viewpoint from atop the racial order. The remainder of this introduction briefly elaborates on each of these three contributions.

First, by situating White public opinion within the parameters of the particular history, politics, and racial and economic geography of Baton Rouge, Part III engages with the inevitability of endogeneity that I have discussed throughout Parts I and II. While Part II was valuable in using a panel to analyze changing opinions over several years, I was careful in Parts I and II to recognize that some amount of bi-directionality is unavoidable in the relationship between attitudes and contexts. The same holds true in Part III. The additional value of the analysis presented here, however, is that rather than considering the effects of place on preferences, the case of St. George shows preferences being brought to bear on place, in a contentious effort to create a new city and thus alter the boundaries that define place to begin with.[39] Part III therefore offers one way to follow the advice of Robert Sampson et al. regarding endogeneity in contextual research: seeing it not as "a nuisance to be controlled" but rather as part of the greater complexity of studying people in places.[40] Ultimately, Part III supports the thesis's goal of using a geographic lens to illuminate the workings of the American racial order, but does so while offering a new and complex take on the dynamic relationship between attitudes and contexts.

Second, by moving from abstracted preferences as captured on surveys, to preferences as revealed and rationalized in conversation, Part III offers granular evidence supporting my critique of the racial threat hypothesis. Part III crucially illuminates the positionality of Whites as active perceivers of threats in their surroundings—a point central to my arguments in Parts I and II, and further discussed below. But Part III also illustrates the variety of attitudes that might be

39. The more commonly considered "effect" of preferences on place is selection bias, or the likelihood that people will choose to live in certain areas based on their preferences. In the case of hyper-local issues like public education and municipal governance, however, it is more feasible that people would seek to change the boundaries of a given geographic container than when talking about policy issues like welfare or affirmative action that are less sensitive to local boundaries.

40. Robert J. Sampson, Jeffrey D. Morenoff, and Thomas Gannon-Rowley, "Assessing "Neighborhood Effects:" Social Processes and New Directions in Research," *Annual Review of Political Science* 28, no. 1 (2002): 474.

activated when race is salient. With almost equally-sized Black and White populations, Baton Rouge is a context in which race is highly salient on any given day; this was particularly true following the killing of Sterling in July 2016 (and, perhaps, particularly true when Whites were in conversation with me as a Black interviewer—further discussed in Appendix D). In such a setting, I encountered amplified racially tolerant *and* prejudicial attitudes, in keeping with my findings in Part I; and I encountered concern for Whites' own status as distinct from racial animus, in keeping with my findings in Part II. On both accounts, Part III supports my expansion of our typical conceptions of what a threat response might look like.

Relatedly, Part III offers an opportunity to examine the logic of racial threat within a paradigm of Whites seeking to avoid appearances of racism: the St. George incorporation effort worked hard to defend itself against claims that it was racially motivated. On the one hand, this shows how far Louisiana has come since the explicit racism of Huey Long in the 1930s, or the White voters who first led Key to identify the geography of threat in the 1940s. On the other hand, my analysis also suggests what has *not* changed in Louisiana, not only in the form of persistent Black-White inequality, but also in the form of White Southerners' skill when talking about—or around—race. What Gunnar Myrdal commented of his encounters with Whites in the 1940s is arguably still true today: "Everything can be said in the South if it is said 'in the right way."[41]

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, Part III plays a vital role in demonstrating a consistent perspective among Whites with racially conservative preferences *and* those with racially progressive ones. In Parts I and II, I theorized that the polarized policy opinions expressed by Whites were nonetheless rooted in Whites' sense of group position. In Part III, I offer detailed evidence for this claim by showing that Whites' drastically divided opinions on a racialized issue nonetheless fall along a spectrum bounded by their racial group interests. Through analysis of interviews conducted with Whites holding divergent stances toward the St. George movement (and other issues in Baton Rouge), I identify multiple and often contradictory discourses that are deployed by respondents in the performance of four common *discursive practices*. These common practices, I argue, engage Whites in the maintenance of the color line by:

1. denying racial motivations behind White actions or attitudes;
2. minimizing the relevance of racial categories to material outcomes;

41. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 36.

3. prioritizing White concerns and leaving Black ones invisible; and
4. defending the social order.

In keeping with Blumer's conceptualization of prejudice, the first and second practices illuminate prejudicial feelings directed toward an outgroup (or rather, the White respondents' assertions that no such feelings exist), while the third and fourth practices reveal prejudicial feelings concerned with Whites' ingroup.

Taken together, the four practices reveal the influence of a perspective shaped by Whites' location at the top of the racial order. From this position, the White respondents claim authority to explain the workings of the racial order (or its nonexistence), revealing little appreciation that their viewpoint is conditioned by their dominant position.

In concluding Part III, I consider potential challenges to my claim that Whites' racial identity shapes their outlook. After addressing several counterarguments, I present a final body of evidence in support of my claim: the perspectives of Black residents of Baton Rouge, which offer a stark contrast to the perspectives of Whites. As members of the subordinate race, the Black Baton Rougeans are able to engage with Whites' point of view, while also challenging it. They both understand and critique the workings of power in Baton Rouge. Their standpoint starkly differs from that of the most racially progressive Whites in the sample—Whites who are often engaged alongside Blacks in fighting racial disparities in Baton Rouge, but who reveal understandings of the racial divide fundamentally similar to their most racially conservative White peers.

In Chapter 6, I introduce the setting of Baton Rouge and the case of St. George before describing the methodology guiding my study. I draw on existing literature on Whiteness as well as the insights of standpoint theory to understand how Whites' position in the racial order shapes their perspectives. In Chapter 7, I report my findings from interviews conducted with 35 White and 13 Black Baton Rouge residents in the summer of 2016. After discussing the White respondents' engagement in the discursive practices enumerated above, I advocate for a better appreciation of the capacity of Whites' group interests to influence the perspectives of even the most racially progressive Whites.

A whole history remains to be written of spaces—which would at the same time be the history of powers (both these terms in the plural).

- Michel Foucault (1980)
"The Eye of Power"

6

"You Can Only Run So Far:" Introducing the Case of Baton Rouge, Louisiana

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Besides American football and the Christian church, it is hard to think of many institutions more visibly central to life in Baton Rouge than the Interstate. Interstates, to be more precise, as East Baton Rouge Parish is home to several, along with uncommonly bad traffic for a mid-size urban area. Overall travel times in the area are 26% longer on average than they would be under free-flowing traffic conditions—and evening commutes are 69% longer.[1] Particularly in the bustling southeastern part of the parish (i.e. county, in Louisiana terms), congestion is prominent but complaints about it even more so. Much like the weather in England, a comment about traffic

1. Data drawn from TomTom Traffic, a major international traffic index, which ranks Baton Rouge 13th among all American cities for congestion—one of the highest rankings for a mid-size city. See https://www.tomtom.com.

in Baton Rouge is an appropriate one to throw into almost any conversation.

Whether or not the traffic deserves the amount of attention it gets,[2] introducing the setting of Baton Rouge evokes a point journalist Robert Samuelson once made: "[t]o understand America, you must understand highways."[3] My own effort to understand Baton Rouge in the summer of 2016 began on the highway, with a rainy drive down Interstate 10 (I-10) on my first morning in town. I had picked up a rental car in Prairieville—one of the distant but rapidly growing bedroom suburbs of Baton Rouge, located in neighboring Ascension Parish—which gave me several miles of bayou to traverse as I headed west and crossed into East Baton Rouge Parish. As the sparse scenery grew denser, I passed the Country Club of Louisiana, home to some of the state's most expensive real estate; the buzzing Mall of Louisiana, the parish's biggest source of sales tax; and, nearing the city center, the urban lakes behind which lies the sprawling campus of Louisiana State University (LSU). So far, Baton Rouge seemed like a relatively prosperous, if nondescript, city.

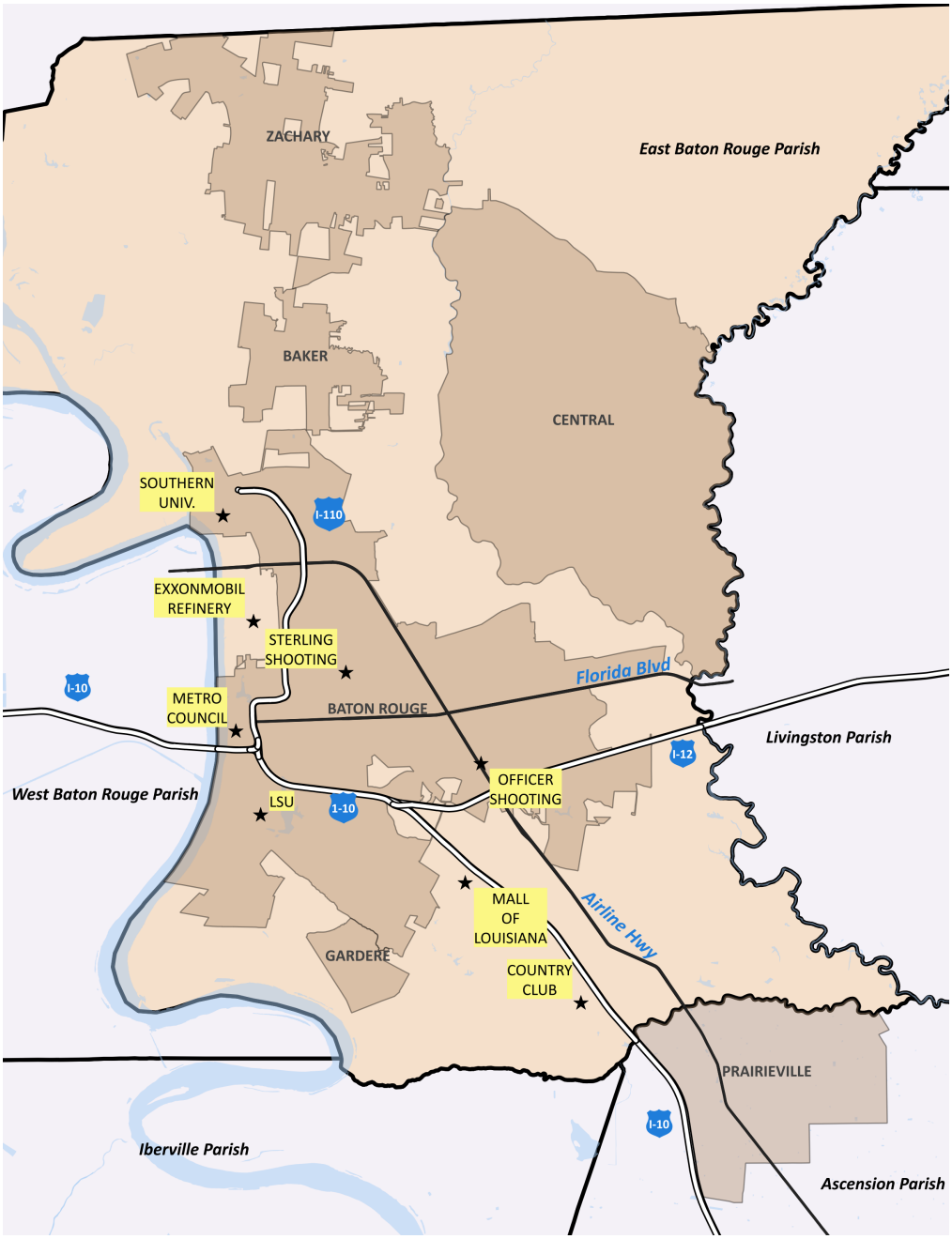
Things changed drastically when I merged onto Interstate 110 (I-110), just past the exit for Florida Boulevard—a street my interview subjects would later describe as the "equator," "Mason-Dixon line," or "great dividing line." Whatever it's called, Florida Boulevard is understood to be the border of North Baton Rouge (NBR), which used to be the heart of the blue-collar White community but is now over 90% Black. My journey took me a bit further north through blighted neighborhoods before I found a parking spot on the campus of Southern University, a historically Black institution. I was there for a funeral.

Thousands of other people had made a similar journey that day to attend the funeral of Alton Sterling—the Black man killed at point-blank range on July 5th, 2016 by two White members of the Baton Rouge police force. I may not have realized at the time, but almost every part of the story Part III tells about race, class, and geography was on display in the 30 miles I traveled to NBR: the disrepair evident on Southern's campus compared to the gleaming grounds of LSU; the location of the I-10/I-110 junction at the center of what used to be a vibrant Black neighborhood before the highway was built; the wealth of the southeastern part of the parish embodied in the Mall and Country Club of Louisiana; Prarieville's reputation as either a "White flight" community

2. For context, the average commute time to work in EBR is 23.4 minutes (2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Commuting Characteristics by Sex (S0801)). This is lower than most major cities—Houston, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and New York, for example, all have average commute times of around 29-33 minutes—and also lower than commute times in the neighboring New Orleans area. Granted, Baton Rouge is much smaller, with the population of East Baton Rouge Parish being just under 500,000.

3. Robert Samuelson, *The Washington Post*, June 25, 1986.

Figure 6.1: Map of East Baton Rouge Parish



Map made in QGIS using Census TIGER/Line shapefiles for county and city boundaries, major roads, and water, based on the 2010 census. As of now, the East Baton Rouge School District encompasses the entire parish except for the cities of Baker, Central, and Zachary. The proposed St. George incorporation and school district would encompass most of the lighter-shaded unincorporated land in the southeast part of East Baton Rouge Parish, as well as the area labeled Gardere (a census-designated place). For the official boundaries of the proposed city of St. George, see Figure 6.2.

or a place known for "good schools," depending on who you ask; and the highway-facilitated sprawl that had me traversing 30 miles in the first place.

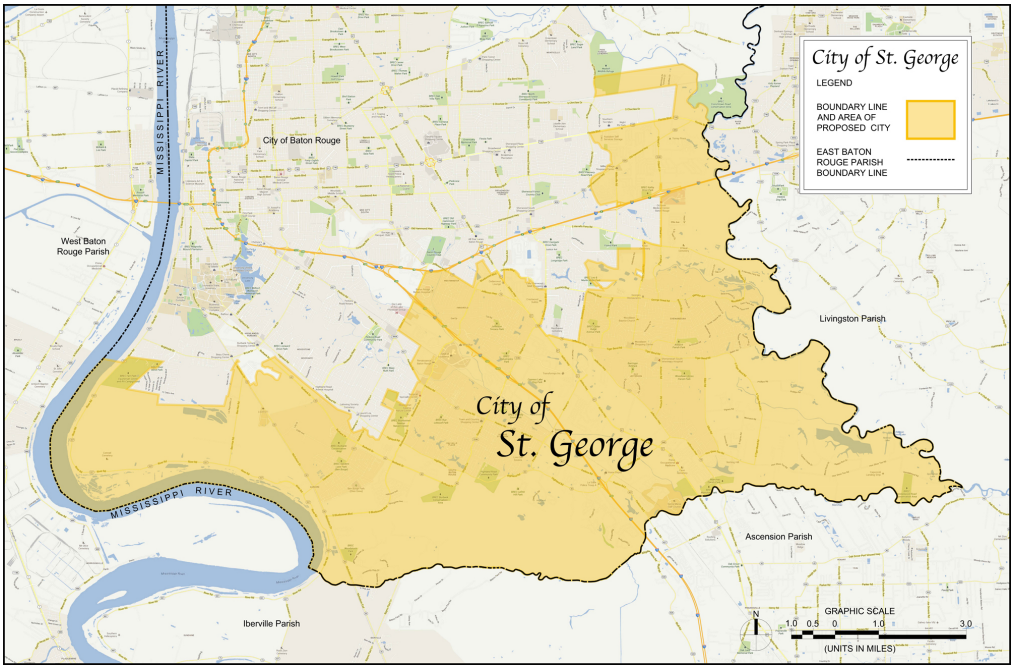
Baton Rouge's sprawled, segregated, and car-dominated landscape is far from unique among American cities. In that sense, it offers a paradigmatic setting for a qualitative study of Whites' racialized political behavior as contextualized by local geography. The particular geography of Baton Rouge detailed above, however, is essential to understanding a recent effort to form a new city in the southeastern part of the parish, to be called St. George. The goal of this chapter is to introduce the St. George incorporation effort; highlight the tangled questions about race, class, and geography the effort provokes; and argue for the theoretical value of the case in revealing a White perspective that constrains the opinion of Whites in Baton Rouge, even as they stand on opposite sides of a polarizing issue such as St. George.

In Section 6.1, I situate the story of St. George within Baton Rouge's fraught and decades-long battle against school desegregation. I discuss the anticipated impact of St. George on the racial demographics and financial situation of both the city of Baton Rouge and the EBR Parish school district, recognizing the tendency of "cityhood" movements to restrict resources to wealthier and Whiter communities. In Section 6.2, I discuss my theoretical approach to studying public opinion in Baton Rouge, particularly in light of the unexpected violence of July 2016 that began with the death of Alton Sterling. I draw upon interpretive methodology, standpoint theory, and previous scholarship on Whiteness to guide my approach and to discuss both the limitations and benefits of my own positionality as a Black researcher of White attitudes (addressed more fully in Appendix D). In Section 6.3, I report the methods by which I accessed and interviewed 48 residents of the larger Baton Rouge area, and identified four common discursive practices in which they engaged.

6.1 Desegregation, Incorporation, and the Case of St. George

East Baton Rouge (EBR) Parish has had a consolidated city-parish government since 1947, with a Mayor-President and Metro Council presiding over both the city of Baton Rouge and the

Figure 6.2: Map of Proposed City of St. George



Source: Official website of St. George incorporation effort (www.stgeorgelouisiana.com)

larger parish.[4] The city had little incentive to annex land as the area grew in the following years: for decades, the city-parish distinction was of little significance. Residents may have known whether the EBR Sheriff's Office or Baton Rouge Police Department would have answered an emergency call, but few could tell you exactly where the jagged boundary line was.

The past five years have made that line drastically more meaningful as a result of the St. George effort, which proposed to include all the unincorporated land in the parish in a new city, complete with its own school district. If the campaign culminating in 2015 had been successful, the over 100,000 people who live in unincorporated EBR Parish would have become residents of the city of St. George. The new city would have been 70% White and 23% Black—in contrast to the population living within the city lines of Baton Rouge, which is 40% White and 55% Black. In formalizing the currently perfunctory border between the southern part of the parish and the central city, St. George would have separated the area with the highest level of human development in Louisiana from the area with the lowest.[5]

4. According to the National Association of Counties, EBR was one of only 34 examples of consolidated city-county governance across the nation's 3,000+ counties as of 2010. See http://www.nlc.org/list-of-consolidated-city-county-governments.

5. Sarah Burd-Sharps, Kristen Lewis, and Eduardo Borges Martins, *A Portrait of Louisiana: Louisiana Human Development Report 2009*, technical report (American Human Development Project, 2009).

Table 6.1 summarizes the disparities across the larger Baton Rouge area based on a state-wide study. Between St. George (Parish Group A) and NBR (Parish Group D), there is a four year difference in life expectancy, an almost 20 percentage-point difference in high school diploma attainment, and a 30 percentage-point difference in bachelor's degree attainment. The similarities between St. George and South Baton Rouge (Parish Group B) further illustrate that the official line separating the unincorporated St. George area from the city is much less consequential for life outcomes than the line traced along Florida Boulevard that marks the boundary of NBR.

Table 6.1: Human Development in the Baton Rouge Area

Neighborhood	Parish Group	Rank in state	Human Development Index	Life expectancy (years)	High school diploma (%)	Bachelor's degree (%)	Median earnings (2007 dollars)	Black population (%)
St. George	E. Baton Rouge (South)-W. Baton Rouge	1	5.73	77.3	91.2	40.6	32,631	23
South Baton Rouge	E. Baton Rouge (South)	3	5.12	76.7	90.6	45.7	23,841	26
Northern Parish	E. Baton Rouge (North)	8	4.47	76.0	85.8	18.8	26,935	42
North Baton Rouge	E. Baton Rouge (North and Central)	36	2.51	72.7	73.3	14.2	16,398	88

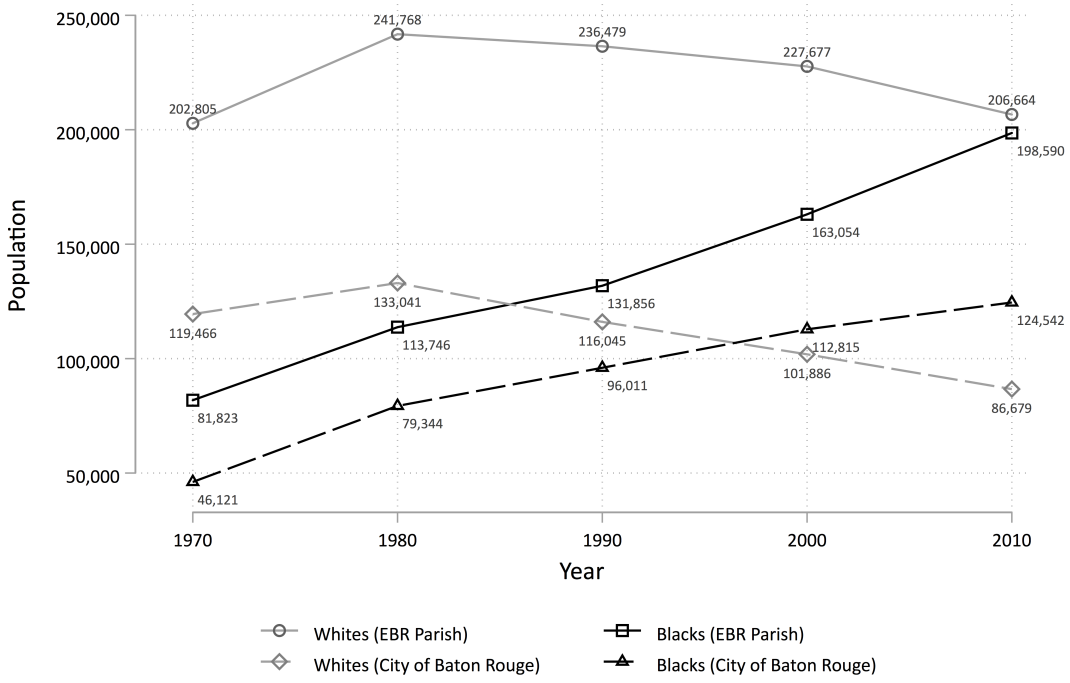
Data and figure drawn from 2009 "Portrait of Louisiana" Human Development study. For the purposes of the 2009 study, the unincorporated area of EBR (i.e. the St. George area) was grouped with a neighboring parish, West Baton Rouge, whose population is only about 25,000. The divide between "South Baton Rouge" and "North Baton Rouge" roughly follows Florida Boulevard.

Such a landscape, where creating a new boundary could drastically change the official demographics of the areas on either side, is a product of longstanding trends. The White population in the city of Baton Rouge has been declining since 1980 as Whites have left the central city for suburbs.[6] But Whites have also been moving out of the parish entirely, with a net migration of 13,574 native-born residents leaving EBR between 2010 and 2016 (see Figure 6.3; EBR's population increase of 6,859 during these years is attributable to births and a small amount of international migration).[7] By contrast, the population of neighboring Ascension Parish grew by

6. Baton Rouge experienced a population shock of about 17,500 people after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, bringing new White and Black residents to the area. It has proved difficult to measure the population fluidity that followed, and to know whether households leaving the parish after 2005 were Katrina evacuees or existing residents. However, this population shock did little to stem (and may have exacerbated) White flight. See David J. Mitchell, "Baton Rouge Grew After Katrina While Forging Closer Ties to Recovering New Orleans," *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge), August 2015, http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_4871291f-0606-520b-a6b5-df73c446c750.html.

7. U.S. Census Bureau. Estimates of the Components of Resident Population Change: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016 – Louisiana. Release Date: March 2017.

Figure 6.3: Demographic Shifts in the Baton Rouge Area



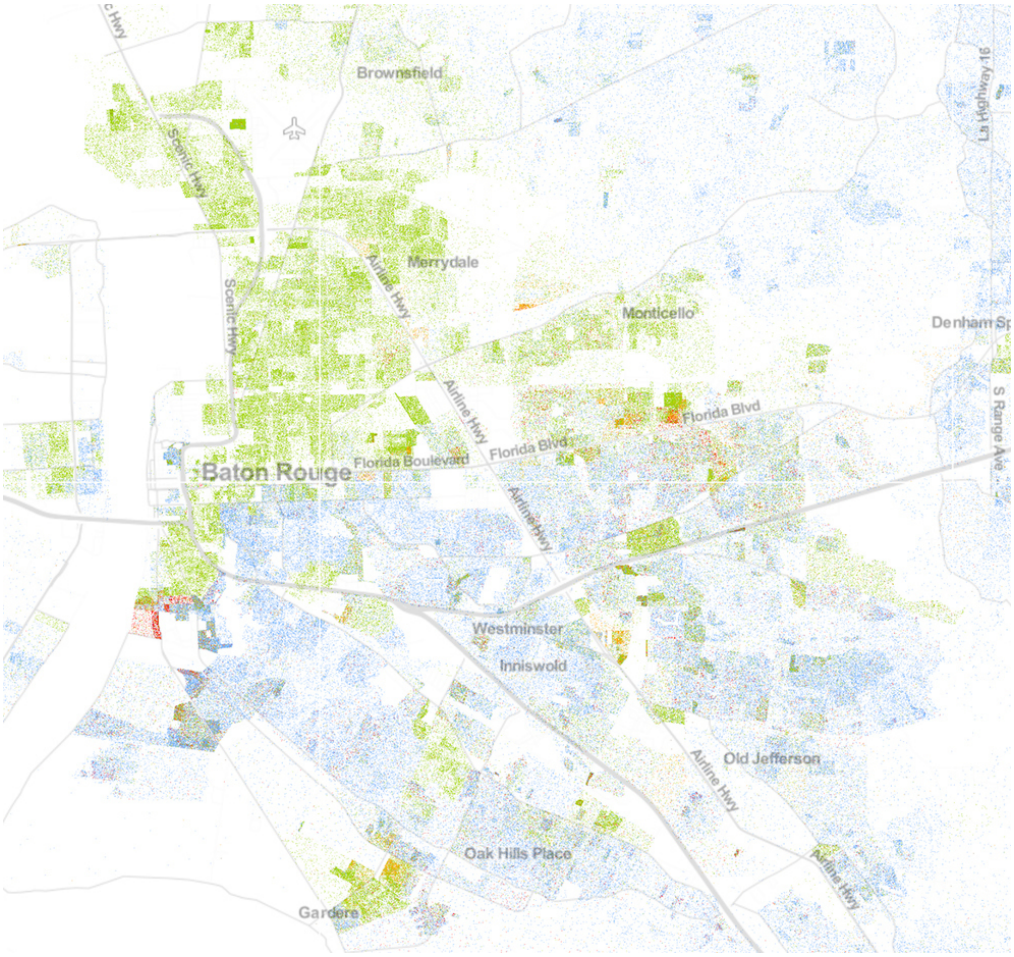
Source: U.S. Census, 1970-2010. Figure illustrates the declining White population and growing Black population in both the city of Baton Rouge and EBR Parish. The city is now majority Black, and the parish is nearly half Black.

14,393, representing a 13.4% increase between 2010 and 2016.[8]

In the process, the area has become more segregated on a macro level (Figure 6.4). As Whites along with affluent Blacks moved away from the central city, NBR became disproportionately Black and poor. The construction of highways facilitated this racial and economic sorting—not only by easing travel to the periphery of the parish, but also due to the placement of I-10 through the heart of Old South Baton Rouge, a historically vibrant, Black neighborhood that began a precipitous decline when construction of the highway started in the late 1950s. This story is one of many examples of the demolition of Black neighborhoods nationwide in the name of urban

8. U.S. Census Bureau. Resident Population Estimates for the 100 Fastest Growing U.S. Counties with 10,000 or More Population in 2010: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016. Release Date: March 2017.

Figure 6.4: Racial Dot Map of Baton Rouge



Source: UVA Cooper Center analysis of 2010 Census Data. Blue dots represent White residents, and green dots represent Black residents. Red and orange dots represent Asian and Hispanic Americans, respectively.

expansion and renewal.[9] Baton Rouge is similarly reflective of national patterns when it comes to the reason that the disproportionately wealthy and White southeastern part of the parish wanted to form a new city in the first place. Its stated primary goal was to break away from the EBR public school system—the defendant in the longest federal desegregation lawsuit in the country.

9. The impact of the Interstate's construction in Baton Rouge deserves more attention than the scope of this thesis allows. The broader story of Black neighborhoods being destroyed by highways, however, is well documented. See, for example, Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), documenting the toll that the building of the Interstate system had on Black communities across the country; Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), documenting the racial impacts of highway construction in Atlanta; and Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1974) on the experiences of Black communities in New York City under the reign of urban planner Robert Moses.

6.1.1 Desegregation and the fracturing of EBR schools

The EBR Parish School Board's long battle with desegregation began in 1956 when, in light of Baton Rouge's starkly segregated schools following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision, the Justice Department filed a lawsuit against the school board.[10] Only in 1963 did the school board begin to take small steps to respond.[11] The plan the board implemented—minimally revised after the NAACP intervened in 1969—was far from assertive. Relying primarily on voluntary desegregation programs, such as allowing students to transfer to schools where theirs was the minority race, EBR schools managed to remain *de facto* segregated through the 1970s. Despite this, in 1975 the district was granted unitary status (a term indicating that the goals of integration had been achieved) in the face of obvious evidence to the contrary. A successful appeal in 1979 led to the transferring of the case to a young judge freshly appointed to the judiciary, John Parker. When the federal government and the school district could not agree on a new desegregation plan, Parker decided to implement his own.

The arrival of "busing" in Baton Rouge

Parker's 1981 desegregation order was drastic compared to EBR's previous attempts. The judge required the closure of thirteen schools and all temporary buildings (which had been used to accommodate more White students at majority-White schools so they could avoid transferring to majority-Black schools). Parker also required that the school board gain court approval for any changes that would affect the racial distribution of students.[12] Most notable, however, was the decision to reassign students to schools across the sprawling district, to which students would travel by bus in order to achieve a racial balance.[13]

10. Cowen Institute, *Louisiana Desegregation Case Studies: East Baton Rouge, West Carroll, and Tangipahoa*, technical report (New Orleans: Tulane University, 2010), http://www.coweninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Louisiana-Desegregation-Case-Studies.pdf.

11. F. Supp., *Davis v. East Baton Rouge Parish School Board*, 1963, 624.

12. Cowen Institute, *Louisiana Desegregation Case Studies: East Baton Rouge, West Carroll, and Tangipahoa*.

13. Louisiana's school districts are larger than other states' because they are more consolidated: in contrast to the degree of local control in places such as Cook County, IL, which has 150 different school districts, almost every parish in Louisiana belongs to a single district. St. George advocates cite the abnormality of EBR's size as an argument in favor of creating smaller districts within the parish, although many education advocates argue that consolidation is more efficient in providing resources across a district.

Parker's plan was similar to contemporaneous "busing" initiatives across the country that sought to address a persistent racial imbalance in schools following the *Brown* decision. Civil rights leaders at the time, as well as historian Matthew Delmont in a recent analysis, pointed out that "busing" itself was a fabricated issue: children traveling to school on buses was hardly a new innovation. White children in particular had always been more likely to enjoy a bus ride to school than Black children, who were more likely to walk. The debates that emerged over "busing" and "neighborhood schools," Delmont argues, allowed Whites to oppose school desegregation in race-neutral terms, all the while centering the feelings of White families rather than the constitutional rights of Black ones.[14]

Needless to say, busing was deeply unpopular among White Americans: in the early 1980s, when Parker brought busing to Baton Rouge, the GSS found that 82% of Whites nationwide opposed forced busing, even as 88% said that Blacks and Whites should attend the same schools—reminiscent of the split in opinion over "welfare" as opposed to "assistance to the poor" discussed in Part I.[15] Beyond the approximately 50% of White students reassigned to predominately Black schools who simply did not show up for the first day of class, schools districts that enforced mandatory desegregation programs lost an average of 13% of their White student populations overall.[16]

These national trends suggest how the busing order was to play out in Baton Rouge. In the fall of 1981, enrollment in EBR public schools fell by 4,722 pupils (7%).[17] Private schools swelled to absorb more students.[18] Then-state representative Woody Jenkins (who would go on to be a

14. Matthew F. Delmont, *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

15. See 1980-1982 GSS data. Whites in regions encompassing southern states expressed noticeably lower support for integrated schools (75%) and slightly more opposition to busing (84%).

16. Christine Rossell, *The Carrot or the Stick for School Desegregation Policy: Magnet Schools or Forced Busing* (Temple University Press, 2010).

17. Frances Frank Marcus, "As Busing Begins in Schools, Louisiana Clears Way for Teaching in Homes," *New York Times* (New Orleans), September 1981, http://www.nytimes.com/1981/09/25/us/as-busing-begins-in-schools-louisiana-clears-way-for-teaching-in-homes.html.

18. It is hard to precisely measure private school enrollment before the Private School Universe survey began in 1989. But, as one of my respondents told me, many in Baton Rouge believe that "the Catholic Church has been the biggest beneficiary of the desegregation suit," citing memories of how much Catholic schools swelled to absorb students leaving the public schools in droves throughout the 80s. A case study of Boston during this period estimated that students transferring to Catholic schools accounted for 20% of the school district's loss of 2000 White students. See James T. Hannon, "The Influence of Catholic Schools on the Desegregation of Public School Systems: A Case Study of White Flight in Boston," *Population Research and Policy Review* 3, no. 3 (1984): 219–237. Similar White flight into private schools has been identified much more recently; see Robert W. Fairlie and Alexandra M. Resch, "Is There "White Flight" into Private Schools? Evidence from the National Educational Longitudinal Survey," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 84, no. 1 (2002): 21–33. For a broader discussion of race and the public-private school divide, see Sean F. Reardon and John T. Yun, *Private School Racial Enrollments and Segregation*, technical report (The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University, 2006), https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/private-school-racial-enrollments-and-segregation.

public proponent of the St. George movement) successfully sponsored a bill removing virtually all requirements for home schooling, in order to "[give] people an escape from a bad system."[19] Judge Parker, himself a White graduate of EBR public schools, received death threats, was socially ostracized, and for years traveled with a U.S. Marshal for protection.[20]

The busing era still looms large in the collective memory of Baton Rouge. As we will see in the next chapter, nostalgia for pre-busing "community schools" features prominently in the rhetoric of many Whites who support initiatives such as St. George. The majority of Blacks I encountered in Baton Rouge had mixed feelings about Parker's orders, recognizing its necessity but also lamenting its negative impacts. One Black respondent lamented not being able to attend the same school that generations of his family had attended. Two retired Black school principals were similarly melancholy when recounting the loss of their most talented teachers, when the effort to achieve a racial mix at the staff level sent the top-performing Black teachers to the traditionally White schools, and the weakest White teachers to the Black schools. All the while, the flood of White students out of the parish continued, taking human, social, and economic capital with it.

By the 1990s, when it was clear that busing had not succeeded in desegregating the district, the school board began to pursue unitary status via a new plan. A 1996 consent decree (that is, a settlement without admission of liability) brought a return to community-based attendance zones in Baton Rouge. The decree also created "magnet" schools with special focuses, intended to attract high-quality students of all races from across the district. Magnet schools were (and still are) seen by many to be a more sustainable and successful way of achieving desegregation goals, although others have pointed out their potentially negative effects on equity across districts[21] as well as within magnet schools themselves.[22] In the case of Baton Rouge, magnet schools have been high performing on the whole but could hardly be credited with desegregating the district. Over half of White students in the district attend a magnet school (and most of the rest attend A- or B-graded schools) compared to 30% of Blacks attending magnet schools.[23] The

19. Ibid.

20. Charles Lussier, "BR's U.S. Judge John Parker dies at Age 85," *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge), 2014, http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/article_61f62680-654a-5e4d-98b9-90d8b1705dd6.html.

21. Janet R. Price and Jane R. Stern, "Magnet Schools as a Strategy for Integration and School Reform," *Yale Law & Policy Review* 5, no. 2 (1987): 291–321.

22. Kimberly C. West, "A Desegregation Tool That Backfired: Magnet Schools and Classroom Segregation," *The Yale Law Journal* 103, no. 8 (1994): 2567–2592.

23. Based on analysis of EBR student enrollment data as of fall 2016. Data available from the Louisiana Department of Education at www.louisianabelieves.com.

district's flagship Baton Rouge Magnet High School offers an example, at 33% White and 45% Black, and with 50% of its students classified as economically disadvantaged.[24] Though not a homogeneously White or wealthy school, it stands out in a district that is only 11% White and 81% Black, and also 81% economically disadvantaged.

Judge Parker quit the case in 2001, exercising his right as a senior judge to do so. Shortly after, the school district petitioned for unitary status, ahead of the deadline of 2004 that Parker had set. More out of fatigue than any sense of success, the desegregation litigation was finally brought to a close through a settlement agreement in 2003.

From busing to breakaway districts

Although the district officially remained under court oversight until 2007, rapid changes followed the settlement agreement. These developments made Baton Rouge a vivid example of the pattern of school districts across the country re-segregating as they were released from court orders in the 1990s and early 2000s. This happened in 70 districts during the Clinton administration, and double that during the second Bush administration.[25] After decades of frustration, deterioration in EBR's facilities (while the district had been prohibited from building new schools), and the departure of White and middle-income students—the end of federal oversight saw three parts of the EBR school system break off and form independent school districts.

First were the cities of Baker and Zachary, two small municipalities that were founded in the northwestern part of the parish in the late 1800s but had historically been part of the EBR school district. Parents in both areas had been agitating to form their own districts well before the lifting of Parker's order and, after 2003, finally were able to do so. Central, LA, an unincorporated suburb in the northeast of the parish, soon followed suit. Central incorporated as a city in 2005

24. The next largest demographic at BRHS is Asian Americans, making up about 15% of the population. For reference, 3.3% of the population of EBR was of Asian descent as of the 2010 Census.

25. Sean F. Reardon et al., "Brown Fades: The End of Court-Ordered School Desegregation and the Resegregation of American Public Schools," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 31, no. 4 (2012): 876–904. Although the Obama administration slowed the process by requiring districts to present desegregation plans before being released, the number of schools under federal oversight has continued to decline. Less than 180 schools of more than 13,500 nationwide remain under oversight. See Emmanuel Felton, "The Department of Justice Is Overseeing the Resegregation of American Schools," *The Nation*, September 2017, https://www.thenation.com/article/the-department-of-justice-is-overseeing-the-resegregation-of-american-schools/.

and then formed a new school district in 2007.[26] Central's departure from the district reduced EBR's White student population to its current standing of 11%. In 1980, before the busing order, the White population of EBR schools stood at 60%.[27]

This brings us to the present day. The Louisiana Department of Education ranks the Zachary and Central school districts at #1 and #2 in the state. In the #3 and #4 spots are Livingston Parish and Ascension Parish schools—both major destinations for people leaving EBR. By contrast, the EBR district ranks 60th out of 73 districts statewide. These disparate rankings are not surprising when we consider the different demographics of the school districts (Table 6.2), given the correlation between academic performance and economic disadvantage at both the individual and school level—and the undeniable overlap between economic disadvantage and race.[28]

Table 6.2: Snapshot of School Districts in East Baton Rouge Parish

District	Rank in state	2016 District letter grade	Students in district	Free/reduced lunch	Per capita income	Proficiency on state exams	Racial makeup
Zachary Community Schools District	1	A	7 schools 5,335 students	43%	$76,154	75%	45% Black 51% White
Central Community Schools District	2	A	5 schools 4,315 students	53%	$74,986	75%	19% Black 76% White
East Baton Rouge Parish School District	60	C	82 schools 42,334 students	81%	$47,164	50%	81% Black 11% White
City of Baker School District	67	D	5 schools 1,753 students	81%	$44,236	39%	94% Black <5% White

Data from Louisiana Department of Education. Exam proficiency refers to student performance on "end of course" tests required for high school diploma. In the 2017/2018 school year, a family of four at 185% of the federal poverty line (earning less than $45,510 annually) would qualify for reduced price meals at public schools, and would qualify for free meals at 130% of the poverty line (earning less than $31,980 annually), according to the US Department of Agriculture.

The disparity between school districts further helps introduce the grievances vocalized by

26. To form a school district in Louisiana requires the passage of a constitutional amendment in the state legislature. See LA Rev Stat §17:72-72.1 for legislation on the establishment of the City of Baker school system, LA Rev Stat §17:64-64.1 for Zachary Community Schools, and LA Rev Stat §17:66-66.1 for Central Community Schools. The fact that Baker and Zachary were already their own municipalities eased the process of lobbying for their own school districts in the legislature. Central, on the other hand, was twice denied its request to form an independent school district before pursuing municipal incorporation as a means to establish the district. This is the process that served as inspiration for St. George—although the St. George effort was much larger in scale, as Central is home to only a quarter of the population as would have formed the proposed city of St. George.

27. Adam Nossiter, "Baton Rouge Desegregation Case Ends," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), August 2003, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/08/17/baton-rouge-desegregation-case-ends/0b0cec5c-67dc-4464-b6ff-64a3d57b01b5/?utm_term=.c13e32101a0c.

28. Stephen J. Caldas and Carl Bankston, "Effect of School Population Socioeconomic Status on Individual Academic Achievement," *The Journal of Educational Research* 90, no. 5 (1997): 269–277.

the St. George effort, and echoed by most Baton Rouge residents regardless of their interest or investment in issues of education. It is commonplace to hear Zachary and Central cited as models of excellence.[29] It is similarly commonplace for St. George supporters to ignore Baker when pointing to examples of prior breakaway school districts.[30] And when it comes to EBR schools, the resounding chorus is that the system is "broken" and "failing." Especially when compared to Zachary and Central, EBR school district employees are likely to point out that the previous breakaway districts took with them a sizeable chunk of high-performing EBR students and their associated funding. The breakaway districts also took school facilities that used to belong to EBR, along with revenue streams to support the pensions of retired teachers who had taught in those schools. Had the proposed St. George school district been formed, it would have displaced over 8,000 students, representing a further loss of resources to EBR.[31]

In keeping with rhetoric dating back to the pre-*Brown* era, St. George advocates argued for the positives of creating "neighborhood schools" with reference to the damage busing had done, and with concerns that EBR was "still busing kids all over the parish." The reality, however, is that the only students still bused outside their attendance zones are bused voluntarily—either to attend

29. One thing that stands out in the snapshot provided in Table 6.2 is the racial makeup of Zachary's school district, which holds across the district's seven schools. Though students might be sorted into honors-level classes *within* schools), without more granular data, we can conclude that Zachary is racially integrated by most accounts. It is therefore unsurprising that Zachary often is pointed to as evidence that the racial makeup of schools is irrelevant to outcomes, because "it's class, not race" that matters.

Zachary's strong performance is helped by the city's affluence: compared to the average White and Black household incomes in EBR of $71,000 and $48,000, respectively, the average is $95,000 for Whites in Zachary and $67,503 for Blacks. Although there are wealthier White communities elsewhere in the parish, Zachary is home to the parish's largest high-income Black population. Zachary thus offers an example of the possible success and stability of integrated schools in settings where Black students are not disproportionately disadvantaged. The problem with holding up Zachary as a paradigm, however, is that it celebrates an end (educational success for Black and White students) without recognizing the means required to get there (e.g. reducing inequality between Black and White families—education being one way of doing so).

It is also worth considering the differences in how Baton Rouge residents often characterize Zachary as opposed to Central. While Zachary is usually referred to as an "integrated" area, Central is described as a "not rich" area. Table 6.2 shows that Central is similarly affluent to Zachary, although much less racially mixed. Central therefore receives the same treatment as St. George—which, as I show in the next chapter, was also often identified as "not rich." Whites thus downplay an area's economic advantage when they are concerned it might easily be portrayed as a wealthy, White community—and invite criticism as "racist." Alternately, when talking about a racially mixed community such as Zachary, it is permissible to talk more openly about economic advantage—in support of the "class, not race" argument, but also revealing an understanding that affluent Whites living in integrated communities are less vulnerable to criticism for economic privilege.

30. In the next chapter, I discuss this pattern in more depth. Baker began agitating for an independent school district as early as the 1980s, and voted to create a district in 1995, despite not seeing the district come into effect until after the desegregation litigation ended. During the long process of establishing the district, Baker's demographics changed drastically, from a city population that was 84% White on the 1980 census to only 20% White today. Its present student population is 94% Black, and 81% of students are economically disadvantaged enough to qualify for free or reduced lunch.

31. Together Baton Rouge, *St. George, Student Displacement, and School Capacity in Unincorporated East Baton Rouge Parish*, 2014.

magnet schools or, for students in underperforming schools, to attend higher performing schools as space allows. It was the latter of these student populations, comprised of virtually no White students, that community groups fighting against St. George were worried was being inaccurately represented. Far from floods of Black students from within the city lines traveling to the unincorporated area to attend school, 91% of the students who traverse the city line do so in the opposite direction: they live in the unincorporated area and attend schools in the city of Baton Rouge, rather than vice versa.

A successful incorporation effort would have reassigned all students who currently cross the city line to new schools in their respective new districts (i.e. either Baton Rouge or St. George, depending on a student's home address). The creation of St. George therefore would have dealt EBR the loss of a student population that was largely White, non-poor, and high achieving—crippling the district's already limited ability to meet the needs of its overwhelmingly non-White, disadvantaged population.

Although this potential outcome was downplayed in the messaging of the St. George campaign, it did not escape the notice of people concerned by the incorporation effort—or of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). The case received limited attention in national media outlets, but one exception to this was a PBS "Frontline" documentary released in July 2014 entitled *Separate and Unequal*.[32] The documentary foregrounded issues of race and class in its telling of the story. In response, the St. George organizers released a statement saying it was "unfortunate" that PBS chose to focus on the desegregation lawsuit and paint the effort as racially motivated: "This movement has NOTHING to do with class or race," the organizers argued. "It has everything to do with parents (black and white, rich and poor) who are fed up with the current education, or lack thereof, in the public schools in East Baton Rouge Parish."[33] Whether someone agreed with the PBS angle or accepted the defense made by the incorporation effort, race was an explicit topic in debates over St. George.

32. PBS Frontline, *Separate and Unequal*, 2014.

33. Committee to Incorporate St. George. "Response to PBS Frontline 'Documentary'," July 2014, http://www.stgeorgelouisiana.com/latest-news/response-to-pbs-frontline-documentary.

6.1.2 The meaning of municipal incorporation

The legacy of school desegregation in Baton Rouge helps explain the relevance of race to the fight over St. George—but this is only half of the story. The other half concerns the fact that the St. George organizers were not just trying to form a new school district. They were trying to form a new city.

St. George's fight for cityhood

Forming a city may seem like a roundabout way to form a school district. It was not the first approach the organizers tried, having launched the effort in 2012 under the banner of "Local Schools for Local Children." The original goal was to lobby the legislature to create a Southeast Community School District, considerably smaller than what would be later proposed as the St. George district. A key source of support for the group was State Senator Mack "Bodi" White, who had helped pass the legislation establishing the schools districts in Zachary, Baker, and Central. After a failed first attempt in 2012, a bill sponsored by Sen. White authorizing the creation of the Southeast district (SB199) passed the House in March 2013. However, the bill that would have amended the state constitution to *fund* the school district (SB73) failed to win the two-thirds vote it required.

As St. George organizers explained the situation to me, legislators told them that cityhood status was what separated their situation from that of Zachary. The organizers felt this argument was an attempt by state lawmakers to dismiss the St. George effort and consequently decided to pursue incorporation as a means to achieve the school district after all. The official wording on the St. George website reflects the stance they ultimately adopted, explaining that the shift to the incorporation strategy ensued when "[t]he character of the opposition to [the first] effort set in motion a larger discussion among grassroots citizens dissatisfied by the quality of governance from the Powers That Be in East Baton Rouge Parish."[34]

Louisiana has lax requirements for municipal incorporation compared to many other states.[35] Only 25% of registered voters in an unincorporated area must sign a petition supporting the effort,

34. Official website for the City of St. George, http://www.stgeorgelouisiana.com/about, accessed July 3, 2017.

35. Carl Vinson Institute of Government, *A Brief Summary of Municipal Incorporation Procedures by State*, technical report (University of Georgia), http://www.senate.ga.gov/committees/Documents/Carl, http://www.senate.ga.gov/committees/Documents/CarlVinsonSummaryMunicipalIncorporationProceduresbyState.pdf.

and then, in a special election to be called by the Governor, a simple majority vote among residents of the area is required for the motion to succeed.[36] Crucially, there is no time limit within which organizers must collect signatures for a petition. And more, there are few avenues to oppose an incorporation effort in Louisiana other than discouraging residents from signing the petition, particularly for opponents who are not residents of the proposed incorporation. Although Central went through this process on the way to forming its own school district, St. George raised the stakes considerably. With a population of 107,000, St. George would be the fifth most populous city in the state, dwarfing Baker (pop. 13,628), Zachary (pop. 16,760), and Central (pop. 28,529). It would be geographically larger than the city of Baton Rouge, encompassing 85 square miles compared to 76. And as mentioned above, St. George would be 70% White in a parish with almost equally sized Black and White populations.[37]

There was disagreement over what it would take to build up and open a large school district in St. George. One report estimated that up to a dozen new schools needed to be built,[38] while St. George advocate Norman Browning insisted the number would be closer to three or four buildings, and that temporary buildings would ease the construction process.[39] However much new construction would be required, St. George would have been aided by its relative wealth within EBR Parish, with a mean household income around $90,000—about $30,000 greater than the mean income in the city of Baton Rouge. Consequently, the current per pupil net revenue of $9,635 in EBR public schools was projected to fall to $8,870, while per pupil funding in the new district would have risen to $11,686.[40]

The research producing these estimates was conducted by a team of LSU economists commissioned by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation (BRAF) and Baton Rouge Area Chamber (BRAC),

36. See 2011 Louisiana Laws, Revised Statutes, TITLE 33—Municipalities and parishes, RS 33:3—Governor's determination; special election, LA Rev Stat 33:3.

37. As of 2016, there were 214,207 White residents and 203,964 Black residents in EBR Parish. (2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Selected Characteristics Of The Native And Foreign-Born Populations (S0501)).

38. Together Baton Rouge, *St. George, Student Displacement, and School Capacity in Unincorporated East Baton Rouge Parish*.

39. Daniel Bethencourt and Charles Lussier, "Opponents Say St. George School District Would Force Construction of More Schools than Proponents Plan," *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge), November 2014, http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/education/article_da1b06da-c9c1-5e39-8e79-b4df6e262ef6.html; PBS Frontline, *Separate and Unequal*.

40. James Richardson, Jared Llorens, and Roy Heidelberg, "On the Possibility of a New City in East Baton Rouge Parish" (Baton Rouge, 2013).

two local institutions with interests in the economic health of Baton Rouge.[41] The BRAF/BRAC report had a major impact on the St. George debate, reaching far beyond the impact of the new city on local public schools. The report estimated that the creation of the new city would take $85 million, or 30%, from the annual revenue of the East Baton Rouge Parish General Fund due to the loss of sales taxes generated in the unincorporated area. The release of these findings in December 2013 spurred a wave of new annexations by the city of Baton Rouge, including the Mall of Louisiana, the southern part of LSU's campus, the L'Auberge casino and hotel, a major film studio, and several hospital sites that were located in the unincorporated area.[42]

The annexations drew sharp criticism from St. George supporters, as each annexation hurt the feasibility of the organizers' claim that "[t]axes shouldn't have to be raised to support a new city."[43] They planned to pursue a "21st-century model" of city governance, with few public employees and broad privatization of city services. The organizers argued that this model had already been proven successful, frequently referencing the example of Sandy Springs, GA (although they did not reference Sandy Springs' long and racialized road to incorporation—from resisting annexation by Atlanta in the 1960s while promising "to build up a city separate from Atlanta and your Negroes," to ultimately incorporating as its own city in 2005).[44]

A second report commissioned by BRAF and BRAC in 2014 challenged the St. George organizers' claims. The report projected serious shortfalls for the city of St. George based on lost tax

41. BRAF is a community foundation that works with philanthropists and local leaders to fund projects meant to serve the "civic good." See http://www.braf.org/. BRAC is, in effect, a chamber of commerce and works to attract jobs and promote economic development in the larger metropolitan area. See http://www.brac.org/.

42. See Charles Lussier, "Annexations Are Shrinking Proposed City of St. George, but the School District Is a Different Story," *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge), February 2015, http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/education/article_227d73e5-173d-5e7a-88ef-%2050433fd336a2.html. The Metro Council was a major forced behind the annexations, helped by organizations such as BRAF and BRAC; it was in the interest of the city-parish to absorb as much of the unincorporated area as possible in order to keep more tax revenue within the official city limits of Baton Rouge. But the sites that were being annexed often had their own interest in joining the city, too. While some may have been opposed to St. George on principle, annexation let them avoid the uncertainty that a change of local government would bring, particularly in regard to taxes.

43. Official website for the City of St. George, http://www.stgeorgelouisiana.com/about/faqs, accessed July 3, 2017.

44. See Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005) for more on cityhood movements in Atlanta, as well as what Kruse characterizes as the progression of southern conservatives from White supremacy to White suburbanization. To be fair, incorporation has at times been a tool of self-determination for Blacks; see Michelle Wilde Anderson, "Dissolving Cities," *Yale Law Journal* 121 (2012): 1364–1446. And a recent effort has emerged from members of a Black community in Atlanta to pursue incorporation, just as their neighbors have; see Sam Rosen, "Atlanta's Controversial 'Cityhood' Movement," *The Atlantic*, April 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/04/the-border-battles-of-atlanta/523884/. I lack the scope to address the incorporation of majority-Black cities, but highlight this possibility to avoid simplifying municipal incorporation to only a tool of Whites. At the same time, the reality of racial inequality and power imbalances means that it has much more often been Whites who have withdrawn from redistributive burdens that tie them to Black communities than vice versa.

revenue following the annexations; the portion of legacy costs St. George would likely be required to assume for the benefits of retired EBR employees; and the feasibility of St. George's plan to spend $564 per capita in comparison to the $1,152 average per capita spending for similarly sized cities.[45] The St. George committee commissioned their own report, released in May 2015 and disputing most of the BRAC/BRAF report's findings.[46] Yet, in conversation, the organizers recognized how much the annexations hurt their plans and expressed frustration that this strategy had been promoted by the "Powers That Be" (i.e. BRAC, BRAF, and the Metro Council) to undermine their efforts.

Legal considerations related to municipal incorporation

So far, I have highlighted the practical impact the new city would have had on life in the parish, but the St. George organizers' choice to pursue cityhood had legal dimensions, too. Municipal incorporation tends to be a strategic move to increase local control over resources, often on racialized terms, by shrinking the circle that benefits from a given community's tax dollars. Legal scholarship on municipal incorporation further illuminates the issues at play.

The fallacy of a "right" to local governance First, despite the tendency for communities to make reference to a "right" to local self-government or municipal identity, no such federally protected right exists. Instead, as Christopher Tyson explains, "social developments and the law have reified and legitimated broadly held expectations about the ability of individuals and groups to withdraw from the redistributive obligations and legacy burdens of cities."[47] This point does not deny the legality of the process by which the St. George organizers pursued the incorporation of a new city. Rather, it emphasizes that deference to local control is often reflective of subjective interpretations of the law.

Take, for example, *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), in which the Supreme Court deferred to a "deeply rooted" tradition of local control over schools to strike down a desegregation plan in Detroit, despite Michigan law clearly stating that education was a matter of statewide—not local—concern.

45. Faulk & Winkler LLC, *A Review of Finances for the Proposed City of St. George*, technical report December (Baton Rouge Area Foundation and Baton Rouge Area Chamber, 2014), http://www.braf.org/braf-research/2016/2/29/analysis-operating-st-george-may-require-tax-increases.

46. Carr Riggs & Ingram, *Estimated Operating Budget for the Proposed City of St. George, Louisiana*, technical report (Metarie, LA, 2015), http://www.stgeorgelouisiana.com/_photos/Final%20St%20George%20Report%202015%20(1).pdf.

47. Christopher J. Tyson, "Municipal Identity as Property," *Pennsylvania State Law Review* 118 (2014): 654.

A commitment to deeply rooted tradition rather than the law similarly pervaded debates about St. George. Proponents often argued for the benefits of "community schools" of the pre-desegregation era, making no reference to the fact that for at least two decades these "community schools" were in blatant violation of federal orders to desegregate.

The tautology of using geography to define a community A second insight from scholarship on municipal incorporation notes that cityhood is often fought for on the basis of a community's identity—but to define a community's identity with reference to boundaries inevitably verges on tautology. As Richard Ford has argued, to say that people comprise a community because they live in a particular area is to give space itself a seemingly objective or even primordial role in defining the community. Such statements rarely engage with why only area X, rather than area X plus area Y, is the most valid definition of the community.[48]

In the case of St. George, the slippery nature of defining a new community with reference to a geographical boundary—and a non-salient boundary at that—was apparent in the ambivalent opinions expressed about the identity of the proposed city. Some ardent St. George backers, for example, spoke enthusiastically about a new municipal identity based on good schools and privatized services. Yet, they also would minimize the importance of this identity when trying to downplay the effect the incorporation would have on the larger area: "I mean, I don't think anything changes . . . it's like a suburb," one St. George organizer told me, explaining that the area would still identify as part of Baton Rouge.

Respondents were typically assertive in embracing the identity of being from "Baton Rouge" (irrespective of where in the larger area a respondent lived). Multiple Black residents of the unincorporated areas told me they would have moved into the city boundaries had the incorporation effort succeeded. One volunteer who had helped with grassroots efforts to oppose St. George described a group of "older White ladies [who] were like, 'I live in Baton Rouge; I've been born and raised in Baton Rouge; my address is going to *say* Baton Rouge"'—and then petitioned on their own to be annexed into Baton Rouge in order to eliminate the possibility of being included in the proposed city of St. George.

48. Richard Thompson Ford, "The Boundaries of Race: Political Geography in Legal Analysis," *Harvard Law Review*, 1994, 1860.

The dilemma of who decides A final insight from scholarship on incorporation follows from the challenge of defining communities with boundaries, and goes on to ask—who decides? This question illuminates what Richard Briffault calls the local boundary problem: "[b]oundaries exclude people who may be interested in or affected by the decision made within the boundaries."[49] Localities tend to make decisions in their short-term economic interests, seeking to attract residents and firms that contribute more in tax revenue than they cost in service consumption.[50] In the long term, however, localities' economic wellbeing depends on areas outside their boundaries. Not only does the economic health of a region suffer when inequality between the city and the suburbs is greater,[51] but large income disparities also hurt employment and population growth region-wide.[52] Even if St. George were to be a thriving city, a weakened and impoverished city of Baton Rouge would be a detriment for the health of the larger metropolitan area (including St. George itself) in the long term.

Some opponents of the effort made arguments along these lines. "The better it is in these other areas," one St. George opponent told me, the "healthier, happier, and safer" her own community would be. "If you've got hurt here (*she pointed to NBR on a map*), it spills over everywhere." Proponents of the St. George movement, on the other hand, were more likely to argue that competition from St. George would push Baton Rouge to improve. I lack the scope to investigate what the incorporation of St. George may have meant for the area in the long term. Yet, it is clear that the St. George effort offers an example of the local boundary problem in action. Aside from the efforts of city institutions like BRAF and BRAC, there were limited avenues for non-residents of the proposed new city to voice an opinion on St. George. As a result, concerned Baton Rogueans organized a grassroots counter-effort to try to, as they described it "keep the community together."

49. Richard Briffault, "Who Rules at Home? One Person/One Vote and Local Governments," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 60, no. 2 (1993): 1132.

50. Werner Z. Hirsch and Joel G. Hirsch, "Exclusionary Zoning: Local Property Taxation and the Unique-Ubiquitous Resource Distinction," *Southern California Law Review* 52 (1978); Mark Schneider, *The Competitive City: The Political Economy of Suburbia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), See also.

51. Hank V. Savitch et al., "Ties That Bind: Central Cities, Suburbs, and the New Metropolitan Region," *Economic Development Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (1993): 67-69.

52. Briffault, "Who Rules at Home? One Person/One Vote and Local Governments," 1132.

6.1.3 A failed petition, a waiting game, and the violent summer of 2016

An early leader of the counter-effort to St. George was a parent-led organization called One Community, One School District (OCOSD), founded in 2012. When a nascent St. George effort was still trying only to establish a school district in the southeast, OCOSD played a major role in lobbying the legislature to preserve the unified school district. As the strategy to incorporate a city developed, so did the opposition. OCOSD continued fighting the incorporation effort. Further institutional opposition came from organizations such as BRAC and BRAF in sponsoring research into the effects of St. George. And with incorporation on the table, the Metro Council now had the option of annexing unincorporated territory into the city to reduce St. George's potential tax base.

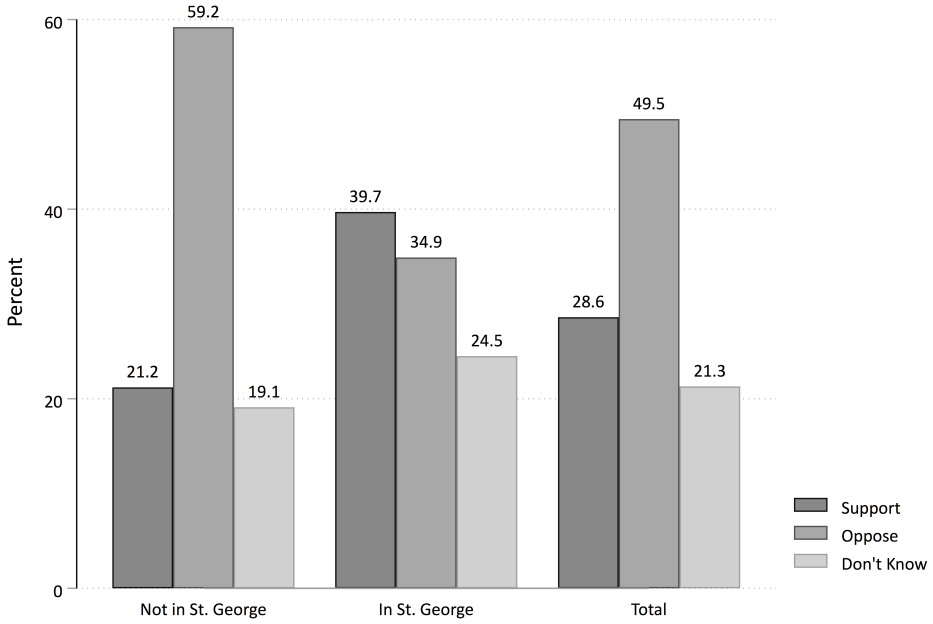
Another major opponent emerged from a multi-faith community organization called Together Baton Rouge, which formed a spinoff group called Better Together to focus exclusively on fighting St. George. Better Together primarily sought to educate residents of the St. George area about the implications of the incorporation, fighting what they saw as a widespread misconception that signing the petition only indicated willingness for the issue to be voted on, rather than the signatory's official support for the effort (many signatories had also been unaware that their names would be publically accessible). Better Together competed with the St. George organizers by going door-to-door to talk about the petition, but in this case to inform residents that they could *remove* their signatures from the petition if they chose.

Mixed support for the incorporation effort

As illustrated by Figure 6.5, public opinion over the issue was deeply divided.[53] Nearly half of EBR voters opposed the St. George petition, driven by strong opposition from those who did not live in the proposed incorporation. More support was found among voters living in the St. George area—although nearly as many residents of the area opposed the petition. Keep in mind that the demographics of the "Not in St. George" and "In St. George" categories differ drastically. Among those surveyed about the St. George issue by LSU's Public Policy Research

53. Michael Climek and Maxwell Means, "Support/Opposition for the Proposed City of St. George in East Baton Rouge Parish" (2013).

Figure 6.5: Public Opinion on the St. George Incorporation Effort



Source: LSU Public Policy Research Lab, 2013 (n = 1,097).

Lab, residents of the proposed new city were 78% White and 50% Republican, while those residing elsewhere were 36% White and 18% Republican.

There were still several notable points of agreement between residents and non-residents of St. George. First, St. George area residents were only marginally more likely than other residents to cite education as the biggest issue facing the parish (33% as opposed to 28%). This similarity suggests that limited concern about education might have been an impediment to rallying further support for the St. George effort.

Second, residents of the St. George area were equally likely to say that the creation of a new city would have a negative effect on the city of Baton Rouge (62% as opposed to 63% of non-residents). Relatedly, though St. George residents were less likely to say that the incorporation would negatively impact the larger parish, more than half still agreed with this statement (53% as opposed to 63% of non-residents). These numbers suggest that at least some supporters of St. George felt the incorporation would hurt their neighbors, but perhaps considered this beyond their concern.

Third, more than half of all those surveyed, whether residents of the St. George area or not, incorrectly believed that the area was already part of the incorporated city of Baton Rouge. These

misconceptions were a source of frustration for the organizers of the incorporation effort, who felt they were mischaracterized as trying to "break away" from a city that they never belonged to in the first place. At the same time, these misconceptions re-emphasize the extent to which the official boundary separating the city from the unincorporated areas has historically held little meaning for residents of the area, and the corresponding difficulty of appealing to a distinct identity of the unincorporated area.

On October 20th, 2014, the St. George organizers turned in a petition with over 18,000 signatures for the parish Registrar of Voters to count. While signatures were being verified, the organizers were allowed to collect more, and the opposition effort continued reaching out to people to remove signatures, too. In June of 2015, however, the petition was ultimately declared short by a mere 71 signatures.[54] After a state judge quickly dismissed the lawsuit the St. George campaign had tried to bring against the Registrar's Office—a dismissal which organizers considered deeply unfair—the 2013-2015 campaign officially ended in defeat. State law mandated a two-year waiting period before another incorporation attempt could be launched.

Where the present study begins

This waiting period was the background of my research in Baton Rouge. The sentiment around St. George was what one might expect—mildly evocative of Montgomery, AB in the months following the bus boycott as Baldwin described it: "aimlessly hostile, [...] having inherited nothing less than an ocean of spilt milk."[55] Those involved in the leadership of the St. George effort were resolute that they would try again and be successful. Many who had opposed St. George, although relieved by the 2015 defeat, were worried that the St. George organizers were right, and that some form of the incorporation would eventually succeed. The events of early July deeply disrupted what might have otherwise been a mix of suppressed anger and tenuous relief that the community had stayed together.

54. The final petition contained 17,788 legitimate signatures, but 17,859 were needed. Although the organizers collected an additional 4,600 names after the ruling in March that they were short by 2,700, scores of names were also removed in the final weeks of the effort by signatories who changed their minds—due to Better Together or OCOSD's efforts or otherwise. See Diana Samuels, "Registrar's Office Approved Invalid St. George Petition Signatures, Opposition Says," *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), June 2015, http://www.nola.com/news/baton-rouge/index.ssf/2015/06/registrars_office_approved_inv.htm.

55. James Baldwin, "The Dangerous Road Before Martin Luther King," *Harper's Magazine*, February 1961, 641.

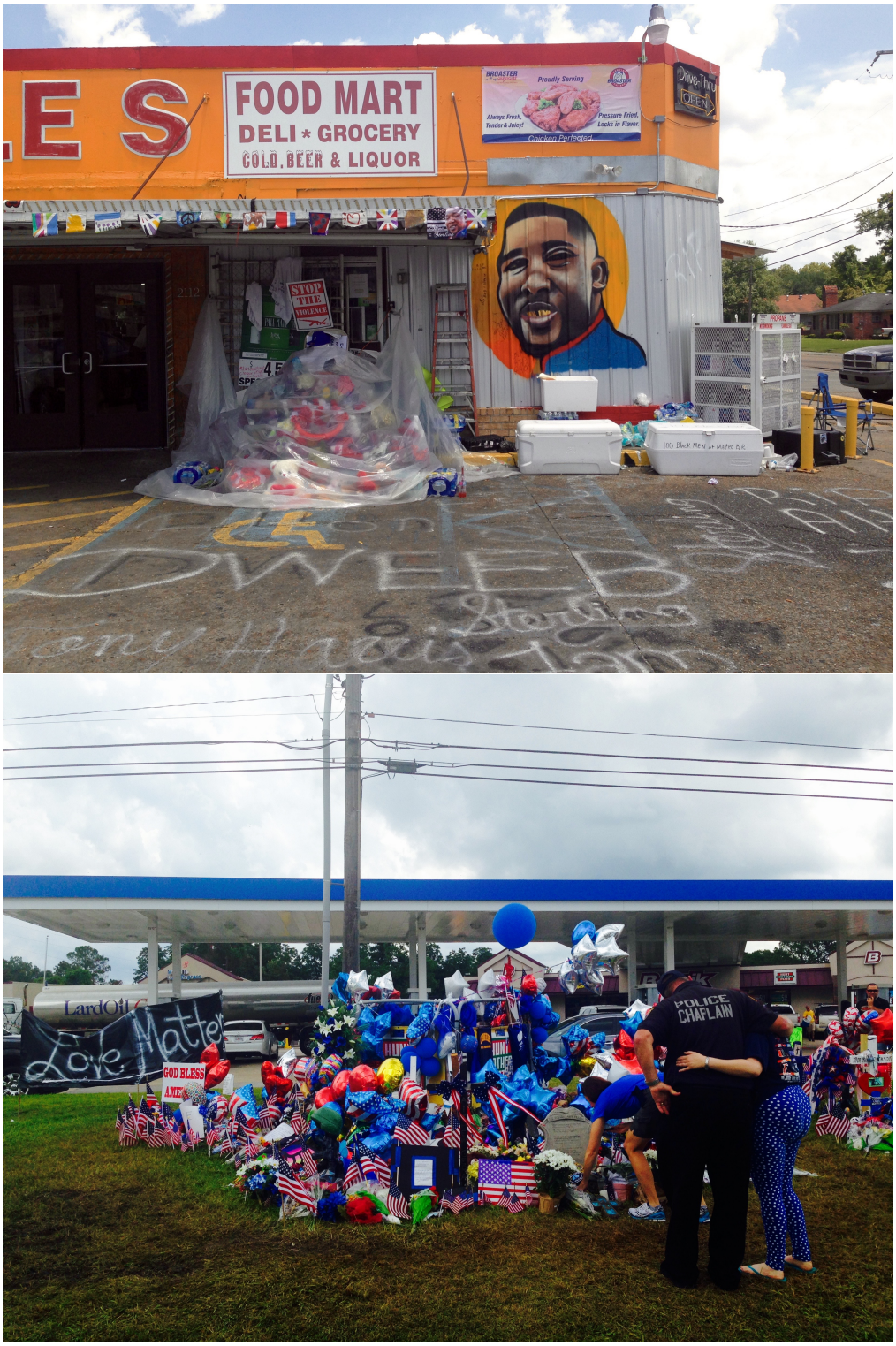
The shooting of Sterling on July 5th, the video footage of the event, and the protests that followed stunned residents of EBR Parish. Sterling was far from the first to suffer from racialized policing, but he was the first in decades to bring race-related violence in Baton Rouge into the national spotlight, and to bring wide attention to the dire social conditions in NBR that contextualized Sterling's life and premature death. As one LSU student described the aftermath of July 5th, "there was probably 24 hours where everybody, even the Whitest, frattiest, Greek guy was like, 'that was bad."'

Beyond the immediate shock of Sterling's death, however, support for the police began to emerge. No one could have expected how that support would be amplified after five police officers were killed in a sniper attack in Dallas on July 7th, let alone what would happen after a Black Marine Corps veteran from Missouri, Gavin Long, was spotted with an assault rifle outside of a convenience store on one of Baton Rouge's major streets, around 8:40am on Sunday, July 17th. Long fired 43 rounds over the next 14 minutes, ultimately killing two Baton Rouge Police Department officers, Montrell Jackson and Matthew Gerald, along with EBR Sheriff's Deputy Brad Garafola. Sheriff's Deputy Nick Tullier sustained life-threatening injuries that day; only in October 2017 was he moved out of an intensive treatment facility into a transitional rehabilitation center. Another police officer and a deputy sustained less serious injuries in the attack.

What did these tragic events mean for my research into White public opinion in Baton Rouge? I had planned to study opinion on the St. George issue long before the shootings. When I conducted my first interviews on Monday, July 18th, the mood was a starkly different one than I had anticipated. Yet, I found that respondents' reflections on the shootings touched on the same themes raised by the St. George issue. The location of Sterling's shooting in a ghettoized part of NBR, the tensions surrounding the Black Lives Matter protests that followed, the frequent implication that those who mourned Sterling and those who mourned the officers were (or should have been) mutually exclusive—all of this led respondents to reflect on race more openly than they might have if the shootings had never occurred. Race became too large an "elephant in the room" to ignore. And at least some St. George supporters cited the shootings as even more reason to create their own city. As one told me, "Where Alton Sterling was shot is a *war zone*," he said. "I mean, you will get straight up murdered in that part of town."

The respondent made this comment when explaining why Baton Rouge was going in the wrong direction, and why drastic moves such as incorporation were necessary. He did not condone Ster-

Figure 6.6: Memorials to Alton Sterling and the Fallen Officers



Photos taken by the author in July 2016. The memorial to Sterling was located at the Triple-S Food Mart in NBR where he was killed in the early hours of the morning on July 5th. The memorial to the officers was located near the site of the altercation between Long and local law enforcement, near the intersection of Airline Highway and Old Hammond in the middle of the parish. See map in Figure 6.1.

ling's death. However, Sterling's death was consistent with the St. George supporter's conception of the local geography. If anything, Sterling's death affirmed this respondent's understanding of NBR as a "war zone" and the St. George area as, needless to say, not a war zone; and similarly affirmed the rightness of formally establishing a separate identity for the unincorporated area.

In short, both the St. George case that drew me to Baton Rouge in the first place and the unforeseeable turmoil that enveloped the city in July 2016 provoked reflection on the racialized and unequal geography of EBR, and informed opinion on what, if anything, was to be done. The tragedy of the shootings therefore further illuminated Baton Rouge's deeply wrought color line—the metaphorical and physical divide between Blacks and Whites in the area. As the remainder of Part III will show, the reflections of Whites who supported *and* those who opposed St. George make evident the capacity of their community's particular color line to bend but also to endure—over 60 years after Baton Rouge was first brought to court for excluding Black children from White schools. One Black respondent reflected on how long it had been, for Whites to still be attempting to avoid integrated schools: "We need to figure out how we can live together, work together, go to school together, as opposed to simply segregating ourselves." He sounded exasperated. "You can only run so far."

6.2 Situating St. George in a Study of the Color Line

Having set the scene in south Louisiana, the remainder of this chapter discusses why a study of Baton Rouge, the St. George effort, and the weeks following Sterling and the officers' deaths is valuable to a thesis on the workings of the color line. It is first essential to appreciate how the logic driving a qualitative study of White attitudes differs from the logic driving the quantitative analysis of survey data. In this section, I discuss the rationale for locating my research in Baton Rouge, the interpretive methodology motivating the design of the study, and the expectations that guided my inquiry.

6.2.1 Why study Baton Rouge?

Rather than introducing Baton Rouge as a case of school integration, cityhood movements, or racialized policing, it serves a similar function as the debates over welfare and affirmative action did in Parts I and II—offering a rich background against which to explore White policy preferences as reflective of Whites' position in the racial hierarchy, and contextualized by local geography.

In contrast to Part I and Part II's identification of systematic variation in racialized policy preferences expressed by Whites across the United States, Part III focuses on White attitudes in a single locality. I have already discussed that the case of St. George introduces into the thesis an appreciation that people have the capacity not only to select into but also to *redefine* a given location to suit their preferences, especially when an issue is sensitive to micro geographic containers. While this means the relationship between attitudes and context on display in the St. George incorporation effort differs from the relationships theorized in my quantitative studies, Baton Rouge nonetheless offers an example of the sort of setting that played a key role in both Part I and Part II. Race is nothing if not salient in Baton Rouge.

In keeping with my argument that the July shootings fed into existing debates about race and inequality in Baton Rouge, race was deeply implicated in the St. George movement from the start. And race is simply hard to avoid in a place that is nearly evenly split between Black and White. Baton Rouge is full of barriers between the races, particularly when it comes to where people live, go to school, and go to church. But Baton Rouge is also full of sites akin to what Jane Jacobs would call "seams:" "line[s] of exchange along which two areas are sewn together," or places where the Black and White worlds are enmeshed in one another.[56]

This is not to say the color line does not still hold at the seams. As Jennifer Ritterhouse has pointed out, a major legacy of Jim Crow is knowledge of how to maintain social and emotional distance from Blacks despite physical proximity.[57] Whites in Baton Rouge are as adept at deploying the rhetoric of "colorblindness" as are Whites anywhere—but Whites in Baton Rouge do so in a context where racial diversity is constantly proximate, even if not present in the micro-segregated spaces that persist today. EBR parish therefore offers an ideal setting where we can expect White residents to be chronically aware of race and inequality in their surroundings, and

56. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

57. Jennifer Lynn Ritterhouse, *Growing up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race* (Univ of North Carolina Press, 2006).

where both a policy initiative (St. George) and a tragic occurrence (the July shootings) made that awareness more acute.[58]

A separate benefit of Baton Rouge as a field site has less to do with the case itself and more to do with me as the researcher. As one of my interviewees said of what she called the "displaced Southerner:" "there's always a homing instinct: I will eventually go home." Although the Midwest rivals the South for states with high percentages of the population born in-state, a strong sense of place is part of the Southern identity. And in the particular case of Louisiana, 78% of residents were born in the state—the highest percentage in the nation. This is relevant to my research because a sense of "home" was as central to my interviewees' understanding of why I was there as it was to my own.

Though raised in Texas myself, my family roots on both sides run deep in Louisiana. My familiarity with the field site and access to local knowledge greatly improved the feasibility of my research. Yet, my ties to Louisiana were more than a logistical advantage. As another interviewee told me, what it meant to be from Baton Rouge was to walk into a meeting where you knew no one in the room, but still could march up to the new faces and ask, "Where are you from? Who's your mom?" The fact that my answers to these questions all led back to Louisiana was part of what made my presence in Baton Rouge natural and readily accepted.[59]

I did not take that trust or acceptance lightly. Shamus Khan has noted that anonymity often protects the researcher more than the subjects of research, explaining his decision to use the real name of the elite boarding school at which he based his research and corresponding commitment to "get things right" in his analysis.[60] Concealing the identity of the St. George effort as located in the Baton Rouge area was not an option for me, given unique features of the case (e.g. the city-parish structure, the Baton Rouge desegregation lawsuit) as well as its publicity. All the same, by naming the site as Baton Rouge and being open with my respondents and readers about my connections to the place, I am holding myself accountable to get things right, too.

58. "Chronic awareness" is Zaller's term, as introduced in Chapter 2 Section 2.2.3.

59. See, however, the discussion in Appendix D of the ways in which I remained an outsider in Baton Rouge, along with more detailed thoughts on the significance of my presence as a Black researcher in the interview setting.

60. Shamus Rahman Khan, *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School* (Princeton University Press Princeton, NJ, 2011).

6.2.2 An interpretive approach

Recognizing the role my connection to Baton Rouge played in this research helps introduce the approach to inquiry guiding Part III, breaking form with Parts I and II. In contrast to my positivist analysis of survey data, the methodology guiding this part of the thesis is interpretive: an approach that "privileges local, situated knowledge and situated knowers."[61] Unpacking the components of this definition helps explain what an interpretive approach means in practice.

Seeking to "privilege" a certain kind of knowledge reveals interpretivism's basis in social constructivism: rather than assume a single, objective reality of race relations in Baton Rouge that exists independently of any one person's experience, I assume there to be multiple realities depending on who is doing the telling. I further understand these different truths to be constructed through social interaction; shaped by culture and history; and inextricably tied up with power.[62] These tenets of social constructivism have two main implications for my project. First, while I point out factual inaccuracies in respondents' arguments as appropriate, my goal is not to critique residents' awareness or understanding of issues. Rather, I aim to consider *why* particular "facts" are known and cited over others, and how these facts are stitched together to comprise a coherent viewpoint or understanding of the world. Second, the intersubjective nature of this method of knowledge production requires critical reflection on how the presence of a researcher shapes the data collected. My identity as a Black interviewer talking to White respondents offers an atypical opportunity for this sort of reflection. In Appendix D, I discuss norms of race-matching in qualitative interviews, challenge the assumption that only White interviewers can glean valuable insight about White attitudes, and argue for the potential benefits of conducting research from a non-White perspective. Crucial to interpreting the results presented in Chapter 7, however, is that my interview data undeniably would have differed were it collected by a White researcher. Yet, that researcher would have no less obligation to reflect critically on the role her race played in influencing the nature of knowledge produced in the interview setting.

Returning to the aforementioned definition of interpretive methodology—what does it mean to privilege "local" knowledge? Local knowledge comes from a specific context. By working with a small, non-representative sample, the close study of my participants' reflections is not attempting

61. Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow, *Interpretative Research Design*, New York, 2012, 5-6.
62. Vivien Burr, *Social Constructionism* (New York; London: Routledge, 2003).

to represent population-level variation in White or Black attitudes. Instead, my analysis identifies examples of how coherent standpoints are created by specific individuals using the resources available in their environment. This also does not mean that the insight generated by an interpretive study is applicable only to the context from which it was gleaned. It is my responsibility as researcher to present my analysis as the product of the specific context of Baton Rouge in the tumultuous summer of 2016, while also drawing connections to a broader understanding of the role of White actions and attitudes in upholding the color line.

Finally, a focus on "situated knowledge and knowers" reflects the interpretivist emphasis on individuals' embodied understandings of the world—meaning how they conceive of the world based on their own subjective perspectives and lived experiences. The concept of "situated knowledges" originates in the work of feminist scholar Donna Haraway in her critique of so-called "objective" knowledge.[63] For Haraway, to claim objectivity without considering the position from which things are seen is irresponsible: it positions the knower as "unable to be called to account." On one level, this point restates the above insight that all individuals make sense of the world in their own context and in their own way. Yet, it also introduces an important conversation linking the present study to the thesis's larger concern with the power of racial group interests to shape perspectives.

6.2.3 Using standpoint theory to analyze the White perspective

Far from merely pointing out that perspective is subjective, Haraway's critique calls out the workings of power, and its ability to prioritize certain perspectives over others. Writing in 1988, Haraway was part of the group of feminist scholars developing what is called standpoint theory—briefly introduced in Chapter 1, but integral to my analysis in Part III.

Standpoint theory, Whiteness studies, and the aims of the present analysis

The goal of authors such as Haraway was to offer a critical take on "relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power."[64] Standpoint theory both *explains* how knowledge

63. Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 582-583.

64. Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, 1.

production is contingent on the structural position (i.e. standpoint) of the knower; and *prescribes* that research engage critically with the "conceptual practices of power."[65] While the normative element of standpoint theory was seen by some scholars as controversial for introducing politics into the "objective" world of social science, Smith and others argued for the benefit, and even necessity, of recognizing that knowledge could not help but be situated.

Feminist standpoint theory in particular challenges the assumed neutrality or omniscience of the dominant (male) subject. In doing so, standpoint theorists have emphasized the insight that the subjugated (female) subject has into the workings of power. The argument here is that the workings of a system of power are the most visible to and often the best understood by subjects who are oppressed by that system—whether the system is one of gender domination or race domination (or an intersection of the two). bell hooks, for example, writes about the long tradition of Blacks sharing "with one another 'special' knowledge of Whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of White people"—a necessary practice for survival in a White supremacist world.[66] However, in my application of standpoint theory to a study of White attitudes—complementing my approach in Parts I and II—I focus on the perspective of the *dominant* (White) residents of Baton Rouge.

Although standpoint theory is less frequently used to critique the perspectives of subjects who occupy dominant positions, there is precedent for this approach. One example is Ruth Frankenberg's 1993 book *White Women, Race Matters*,[67] which along with the work of Mary Waters[68] and Peggy McIntosh[69] was an early contribution to conceptualizations of Whiteness (at least by White academics). Frankenberg invokes feminist scholarship to conceptualize what she calls a "White standpoint," explaining how White women's structural position keeps them from seeing how race shapes their lives. Frankenberg's larger contribution is to demonstrate how race nonetheless does shape the lives of her interview subjects—from how White women are socialized, to how they occupy a culture of Whiteness despite considering it simply the norm.

A number of scholars have further developed Frankenberg's approach through qualitative study of White Americans. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has illuminated the linguistics of colorblindness

65. Dorothy E. Smith, *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* (University of Toronto Press, 1990), This term was coined by.
66. hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 165.
67. Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*.
68. Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1990).
69. McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack."

used by Whites to avoid sounding "racist."[70] Nancy DiTomaso has demonstrated how Whites distance themselves from practices of racial inequality that, they argue, are perpetuated by other "racist" Whites.[71] John Hartigan highlights the discourse of (dis)comfort as it reveals the norms of how Whites engage with race.[72] Hartigan's work is complemented by the psychological research of Michael Norton et al., who find that White study participants avoid using race to describe a face when they are paired with a Black confederate.[73] This literature previews how my White respondents' engage with race: typically in a power-evasive (and occasionally also color-evasive) manner.

My concern, however, is not what Whiteness is, or what dispositions it leads Whites to adopt. Part III builds on what we already know about these topics and asks how being White (and thus inhabiting the position of Whiteness in the racial order) is related to the opinions Whites express and the consequences of those opinions. The background of Baton Rouge is crucial in answering this question—and not just because polarized White opinion on a policy effort such as St. George is congruent with polarized opinion analyzed elsewhere in the thesis. Because the present study also is located in a specific location and involves a specific policy issue, it goes further to interrogate how Whites' engagement with the metaphorical color line—whether reinforcing, challenging, or simply ignoring it—stands to impact the line's physical manifestations.

As I argued in Chapter 1, the study of White racial attitudes is not important for its own sake, but rather because what Whites believe about race has the capacity to impact the lives of Black Americans. Similarly, White opinion on St. George and related issues is consequential because Whites in Baton Rouge have a disproportionate amount of power—in a majority Black area—to impact the lives of Blacks in Baton Rouge. This consideration is no less relevant to Whites who are critical of the racial hierarchy, particularly if they are the best positioned allies to and advocates for the Black community, and particularly if their perspectives are nonetheless constrained by their position in the racial hierarchy.

In short, by putting Whiteness in context, I challenge the tendency of essentializing Whiteness as an object of study with only vague consequences for Black lives, rather than recognizing

70. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "The Linguistics of Color Blind Racism: How to Talk Nasty about Blacks without Sounding 'Racist'," *Critical Sociology* 28, nos. 1-2 (2002): 41–64.

71. DiTomaso, *The American Non-Dilemma: Racial Inequality without Racism*.

72. John Hartigan, *Race in the 21st Century: Ethnographic Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

73. Michael I. Norton et al., "Color Blindness and Interracial Interaction: Playing the Political Correctness Game," *Psychological Science* 17, no. 11 (2006): 949–953.

Whiteness as a structural position that determines the shape and outcomes of debates with deep implications for racial inequality.

Critiquing the dominant perspective

The benefit of integrating standpoint theory into a study of Whiteness is that it keeps power relations at the forefront of analysis. Although standpoint theory emphasizes the insight of the marginalized, it offers the larger premise that, as anthropologist David Graeber puts it, hierarchies produce "highly lopsided structures of the imagination."[74] Those at the top of a hierarchy are required to do considerably less "interpretive labor," and give considerably less thought to the experiences of those at the bottom than vice versa.

Unlike Frankenberg, I do not propose that a shared standpoint exists among White residents of Baton Rouge. Although Frankenberg's articulation of a White standpoint is consistent with standpoint *theory* and the premise that dominant subjects are limited in their perspective, her use of "standpoint" as a *term* contradicts the consensus among standpoint theorists that a standpoint is something that must be achieved. The more colloquial "viewpoint" can be ascribed to someone simply by virtue of where they stand, but it takes interpretive effort to turn an oppressive feature of a subordinate position into a critical understanding of the workings of power.[75] Accordingly, I use the more neutral term of a White "perspective" that is evident among Whites in Baton Rouge.

It is not impossible for someone who occupies a dominant identity to achieve insight into how power shapes knowledge—particularly given the many ways that marginalized and non-marginalized identities intersect. Nonetheless, standpoint is not an appropriate description of the common perspective that Frankenberg's subjects reveal. If anything, Frankenberg herself reveals the limits of her own White perspective by falling into the same power-evasive rhetoric she identifies among her interviewees. She is at the very least passive in articulating her research question as how "white women are created as social actors primed to reproduce racism," which positions White women as victims of a racist system.[76]

74. David Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* (London: Melville House, 2015), 72.
75. Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*, 8.
76. Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, 5.

The point is not to assign individualized blame to Whites for having a limited capacity for imagination, empathy, or understanding. At the same time, these limitations stem from Whites' place in a hierarchy that Whites have collectively built, maintained, and benefitted from. Such is the consequence of the epistemology of ignorance on which White dominance is built—producing what Mills calls "the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world *they themselves have made*."[77] Mills's reference to "whites in general" recognizes that some Whites are deeply committed to better understanding the world they have made, but commitment alone does not necessarily bring insight into the workings of power. For example, Whites who identify as anti-racist are nonetheless prone to express racial identities that are remarkably similar to those of White nationalists.[78] As Nancy Hartsock puts it, "there are some perspectives on society from which, however well-intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible."[79]

What about the standpoint of the Black residents I encountered in Baton Rouge? Standpoint theory tells us that they will inevitably offer a different—and theoretically valuable—perspective. Although discussed in Chapter 7, the standpoint of Blacks in Baton Rouge merits more attention than there is scope to include in this study. It is important to note, however, that the perspectives of the subjugated are not "innocent" or exempt from critique. Individuals in nondominant positions are simply less likely to deny that knowledge is fundamentally interpretive.[80] I do not characterize the Black respondents as morally superior to the White respondents, nor do I assume they have all realized the potential insight that their structural position offers. Instead, I appreciate that my Black interview subjects' lived experiences, in a place marked by racial division and inequality, are likely to offer them insight into how the racial order functions in Baton Rouge.

77. Emphasis added. Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 18.

78. Matthew W. Hughey, "The (Dis)similarities of White Racial Identities: The Conceptual Framework of 'Hegemonic Whiteness'," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33, no. 8 (2010): 1289–1309.

79. Nancy C. M. Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism," in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, ed. Sandra Harding (New York: Routledge, 2004), 36-37.

80. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," 584.

6.3 Data and Methods

Having detailed my case selection and the logic guiding the case study, I conclude the chapter by reporting my methods of data collection and analysis.

6.3.1 Data collection: Methods of sampling and interviewing

In July and August of 2016, I interviewed 48 residents[81] of the greater Baton Rouge area who were located via a stratified, purposeful sampling approach.[82] The sample was stratified in that I aimed to capture a variety of perspectives on the St. George movement (as well as on life in Baton Rouge more generally); and purposeful in that it was constructed in order to include people likely to have opinions on St. George, although I also sought out observers of the movement. I began by locating respondents I could easily access, across a range of categories—public figures that had been associated with the movement or the various sources of opposition; people connected to the school district or to the Catholic Church; residents I found through my local network—and then snowballed from there. I asked each respondent for recommendations of other people to interview, or events to attend. I also encountered a number of respondents by spending time at local coffee shops, school board meetings, or around LSU's campus, following the example of Katherine Cramer and other ethnographic researchers.[83]

A full list of respondents is provided in Appendix E. For the purposes of analysis, it is helpful to think of respondents as falling into five categories.

St. George supporters (n = 8): White residents of the Baton Rouge area who actively supported the St. George incorporation effect, whether as volunteers on or leaders of the campaign, signatories to the

81. My goal upon beginning the project was to interview at least 15 residents. I well exceeded that goal, perhaps having underestimated the willingness of Southerners to talk to strangers and the ease of accessing even influential people in a relatively small city. Increasing my number of respondents increased the types of perspectives I was exposed to, and thus decreased the likelihood that the patterns I identified among Whites in Baton Rouge were the product of speaking only to a small circle with similar views. At the same time, quality matters over quantity in interpretive research. Methodologists often say that you have "enough" interviews when you reach saturation—when the same things emerge over and over again from new interviewees. Given that I had a limited amount of time and funding with which to conduct my fieldwork I was determined to continue conducting interviews for as long as I was able to stay in Baton Rouge. Yet, the conversations that filled my final week of fieldwork strongly reinforced the same themes I had been encountering in the weeks prior.

82. Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 3rd ed. (Sage Publications, 2002).

83. Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).

petition, or outspoken advocates.

St. George opponents (n = 8): Whites who were engaged in efforts to fight the incorporation of the new city and/or establishment of the new school district, whether via grassroots or institutional means.

School affiliates (n = 5): White residents connected to the public school system.

Observers (n = 14): White residents of the area who ranged from critical of to sympathetic to St. George, but had not been actively involved with either the movement itself nor the opposition to it.

Black respondents (n = 13): Black, or mixed race but Black-identifying, residents of the area. Some were actively connected to the opposition to St. George, some connected to the school system, and others simply observers.

The Black residents I encountered were uniformly opposed to St. George, though I cannot claim that there was zero support for the incorporation or the school district among Blacks in the area. There are extreme examples of Black support, such as Tea Party activist C.L. Bryant, who is not a resident of the Baton Rouge area but was a public advocate for St. George—but I was unable to locate any Black residents of the unincorporated area who had supported the petition.

The sample tended to be older (average age = 52, std. dev. = 15), included 30 males and 18 females, and contained virtually no low-income individuals. These trends reflect the purposive sampling approach that led me to the disproportionately male, middle-aged, and middle-income individuals who hold positions of influence in Baton Rouge (including within the St. George movement, though to a lesser extent among the opposition). The skew of these demographics should be kept in mind when reading my analysis. At the same time, contextuality, not representativeness or generalizability, should be the goal of an interpretive project such as this.[84] I therefore describe the makeup of my sample, just as I described the particular context of Baton Rouge above, in order to show readers how my findings "work in context" and equip them to think about how the findings might similarly or differently work in another context.[85]

All interviews were conducted in person, with the exception of three conducted over the phone (one due to the respondent's scheduling constraints, and the other two due to flooding that immobilized Baton Rouge in mid-August). Interviews lasted an hour on average and took place in a variety of locations: many in coffee shops, public libraries, or respondents' workplaces. Each

84. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, *Interpretative Research Design*, 48.
85. Ibid.

interviewee was given an information sheet that detailed the project and explained that all data would be anonymized, and was then asked to give oral consent to the interview process. I began interviews by asking respondents to describe EBR Parish and offered them a map of the area as a visual aid (see Appendix E.4). I then followed my interview script, diverging if the respondent wanted to, but centering conversation on the St. George movement, schools in Baton Rouge, and broader issues facing the city-parish. In almost every case, the conversation naturally wandered to the events of early July. The interview information sheet and interview script are provided in Appendix E.

6.3.2 Data analysis: Linguistic patterns as "discursive practices"

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed in a three-stage process.[86] The first stage was "open coding," or an initial review to identify general features that appeared throughout the data—such as references, figures of speech, particular arguments and opinions, or descriptions of events. I then arranged codes into larger themes, thinking about how the patterns that appeared throughout the interviews spoke to broader concepts. In this second stage of analysis, I created a data display, or a visual organization of the data that helped me categorize codes in the process of sorting them into themes.[87] In a final stage of analysis, I considered the relationships between these themes, often used to express opposing views on a given topic, to identify four common *discursive practices* engaged in by the White respondents. I argue that these practices structured the reflections of White respondents across the sample, despite respondents' polarization in opinion on a range of racialized issues.

On discourse

The term "discourse" has been given a variety of definitions and thus is prone to vague usage. I understand discourses to be mechanisms of power that determine what is and is not said—whether a discourse takes the form of a version of events, a particular understanding of a social phenomenon,

86. I designed my coding process according to the recommendations of Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101 and Robert S. Weiss, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* (New York: The Free Press, 1994).

87. Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook* (Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE Publications, 1994).

or some other interpretation of the "truth."[88] All of these serve as frames of reference on which individuals base their ideas and understandings. A quintessential example is colorblindness—the contemporary frame of reference that considers overtly racist language unacceptable but still provides Whites with a language for justifying racial inequality.

My use of the term "discursive" intends to describe what respondents are doing in the literal sense (i.e. talking to me). It further recognizes that their speech reflects not merely their own opinions, but also the interpretive resources they are using to describe the world around them.

On practice

More central to my analysis is the term "practices." Khan's ethnography of privileged American youth emphasizes a disjuncture between what elite boarding school students *say* (espouse meritocracy) and what they *do* (entrench privilege).[89] Similarly, I am interested in how my White respondents reproduce a number of discourses by espousing varied (and at times contradictory) points of view that nonetheless achieve similar ends. Whites in Baton Rouge *say* a range of things, but, as I will show in Chapter 7, *do* four things: deny racism, minimize racial categories, prioritize White concerns, and defend the social order. All of these, I argue, serve to legitimize the color line in Baton Rouge.

To say the White respondents are engaging in discursive "practices" references the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose theory of practice explains the social world as a dialectic relationship between social structures (e.g. state and economic institutions, cultural norms, and language) and human agents. Central to this interplay is Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*.[90] Habitus refers to the embodied, durable dispositions that inform how an individual interprets the world—one's "feel for the game" of social and political relations.[91] Scholars of race relations have previously proposed

88. The obvious reference to make here is to Foucault, who called discourses the "common sense of a culture," thus reflecting the power interests who determine what is common sense. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaelogy of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

89. Khan, *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul's School*.

90. The term "habitus" itself long predates Bourdieu. It was originally coined by Aristotle and then used sporadically by other thinkers, most notably Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss in the 20th century. But, Bourdieu is the one who translated habitus into an analytically useful, sociological concept.

91. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 66-68.

the idea of a "White habitus" to reference the common ways Whites are socialized based on their position in the racial hierarchy, and thus the common ways Whites tend to see the world.[92]

Because habitus descends from (even as it dialectically shapes and often reproduces) one's place in the social structure, it is a helpful concept for thinking about how Whites' positionality would reveal itself in action. Each of my White respondents would have entered the interview setting with an intuitive understanding of how to move through the local world of Baton Rouge, including what is appropriate to say and how to say it, shaped by their racial identity. Each one's understanding would have informed their instinctive decisions in conversation with me. Close analysis of my interview data therefore offers a chance to consider the respondents' choices in offering a particular interpretation of events, emphasizing certain arguments, or at times correcting themselves for having seemingly misspoken.

Of course, a semi-structured interview is not the way most people converse on a day-to-day basis. My presence as a researcher therefore presented an instance in which the respondents' "feel for the game" was put into practice in an unfamiliar setting. How a system works, however, is often revealed just as much by its stumbles as by its smooth operation. This means that even if the setting was unnatural, the way respondents grappled with, went back and forth on, and ultimately came to answer my questions was revealing of what they understood to be the "right" or "true" understanding of their local world in Baton Rouge. And even if my presence as a *Black* interviewer influenced respondents' speech, the same underlying habitus—shaped by life in a high-density Black area—would have guided their instincts about how to speak to me.

In the next chapter I report what was said, identifying four discursive practices engaged in by my White respondents that demonstrate the flexibility and strength of the color line in Baton Rouge.

92. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*; DiAngelo, "White Fragility."

Here we don't heal. We scar.

- Jelani Cobb (2014)
The New Yorker

7

The White Perspective in a Divided City

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I was surprised not to have gotten a flat-out rejection sooner. "Now listen here: I've been around a long time." I grimaced with the phone held to my ear. I hadn't been told to "listen here" since I was a teenager; the term does not usually preface good news. "Why would someone come all the way from Oxford to ask about St. George if not to try to expose it as some sort of 'racist' effort?" This chilly response came from a supporter of the St. George effort and colorful

persona in the Baton Rouge community named Randy.[1] His reply exposed how central race had become to the conversation around St. George: supporters were actively on the defense to demonstrate it was not racially motivated.

It is a testament to how small a mid-size city can feel that, less than a week later, I found myself squeezed into a twelve-year-old-sized desk next to none other than Randy himself. We were both attending a school board event at a local middle school. He had arrived shortly after the meeting started. The only open seat was right next to me. He, of course, had no idea that I was the researcher who had "come all the way from Oxford."

Both of us blended into the mix of attendees at the meeting: older White graduates and younger Black ones of the same Baton Rouge high school, whose racial demographics had flipped drastically in the mid 1980s, but for which the group was organizing a multi-decade alumni event. Randy's persona in this setting was opposite from what I had experienced in our tense first exchange. He was congenial and inclusive, emerged as a natural leader in the biracial group, and clearly was respected by the others for his commitment to the school. I introduced myself to him once the meeting ended. Having spent the last hour sharing a copy of both the meeting agenda and the LSU and Southern football schedules (lest the group accidentally schedule a future event that clashed with a game), Randy was probably more inclined to believe that I had some legitimate interest in the Baton Rouge community than he had been on the phone. Afterward, we ended up sitting down to talk for an hour and a half.

Though an outspoken supporter of the St. George effort, Randy not only lives outside the boundaries of the proposed new city but is one of few White holdouts in NBR. He still lives in the historically White, blue-collar neighborhood where he grew up and has experienced its changing demographics firsthand. During his interview, Randy slightly overestimated the Black majority within the city lines to be 65%, about 10 percentage points too high; but he maintained, "Black-White doesn't play into it, to me, very much."

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1. To protect the anonymity of my respondents, all names have been changed; pseudonyms were selected by referencing the Social Security Administration's lists of popular names in Louisiana in the year a respondent was born. Minor biographical details have also been changed in cases where mentioning a respondent's occupation, for example, could compromise anonymity. Quotes are presented here in minimally edited form, with the occasional removal of interjections or filler words for concision and clarity. Finally, the quotes reported throughout this chapter were selected by virtue of exemplifying the four discursive practices used by the White respondents, and at times colorfully so, but are representative of patterns identified across the universe of data analyzed.

My encounter with Deborah got off to a very different start. In response to my first question, which was simply to tell me about the area, she took a deep breath. "Let me just tell you some of my background…because I don't want to throw your data off." Deborah is a social worker for an organization that provides special education services to children under age five. "A lot of social workers literally choose the nice area by zip code," Deborah told me before explaining that she would work anywhere in the parish where her services were needed. "I've been in lots of parts of Baton Rouge that most people, middle-income people, probably have never been," she said. Underneath Deborah's words are racialized meanings—"nice" and "middle-income" being code for predominantly White areas and a predominantly White income bracket—but what she was trying to communicate to me was clear. Unlike many White, middle-income residents of the parish, Deborah was intimately familiar with the social ills plaguing the area north of Florida Boulevard. As an active member of Together Baton Rouge (TBR), she had vehemently opposed the St. George effort and volunteered time to campaign against it.

Deborah was realistic about the severity of racial inequality in Baton Rouge, but she spoke with pride about how much TBR has brought Blacks and Whites together. "The race crap is gone," she said with elation, in reference to the community group's gatherings. "That is not an issue." As opposed to other settings around town where the topic of race might be avoided, "at Together Baton Rouge, we're comfortable. We've used those words enough with each other. We can talk about it."

•

On the surface, Randy and Deborah look like polar opposites. Randy is proudly conservative, a bold supporter of St. George, and adamant that race is of little significance in Baton Rouge. Deborah falls at the other end of the spectrum in both her politics and her stance on St. George, and believes that racial inequality is a major issue in the parish. Yet, the conclusions Randy and Deborah reach have something in common. Whether "race doesn't play into it" or "the race crap is gone," both reveal an understanding of race relations in which racial group interests are largely irrelevant to shaping one's perspective, priorities, or motivations. Even as Deborah believes that race is a powerful structural force shaping life outcomes in EBR, she argues that racial categories can be superseded when it comes to sharing stories and perspectives.

This chapter explores such instances—when similar logic underlies the speech of White residents of Baton Rouge despite the range of political opinions they express, revealing a shared perspective descending from Whites' place atop the racial hierarchy. I offer evidence for the influence of this common perspective in the form of four discursive practices that structure the reflections of the White respondents. These practices include (1) a rejection of racial motivations as a basis for White attitudes or actions in Baton Rouge in general, or in the St. George effort in particular; (2) an equation of Blacks and Whites based on a depolicitized understanding of the racial divide; (3) an acceptance of White concerns as legitimate and a silence around Black suffering; and (4) a defense of or deference to the social order.

These practices revisit the duality of prejudice as comprised of positive feelings about one's ingroup and negative feelings about an outgroup (Table 7.1). The first two discursive practices are engaged in denying that the outgroup-oriented feelings govern political, economic, and social relations in Baton Rouge. I find a near-universal avoidance of expressing beliefs traditionally understood to be prejudicial. Respondents openly reject the idea that fear or suspicion of Blacks is at play, or that Blacks are intrinsically different from Whites.

On the other hand, the second two discursive practices positively embrace the ingroup-oriented feelings of prejudice—which respondents are less likely to consider prejudicial, but which are equally important in upholding the racial hierarchy. I find a near-universal lack of concern about implying the superiority of Whites or their claim to certain privileges, as respondents both prioritize White interests and reveal deference to the racial status quo.

Table 7.1: Four Discursive Practices, Four Feelings of Prejudice

	Discursive practice	**Feeling of prejudice**
Outgroup-oriented		
1)	Denying racial motivations	*Subordinate race inspires fear and suspicion*
2)	Minimizing racial categories	*Subordinate race is intrinsically different*
Ingroup-oriented		
3)	Prioritizing White concerns	*Dominant race is superior*
4)	Defending the social order	*Dominant race has claim to privilege and advantage*

Synthesizing the discursive practices engaged in by White residents of Baton Rouge with the feelings of prejudice articulated in Blumer (1958) "Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position."

In the background of all of this is the starkly segregated geography of Baton Rouge, with the concentration of Black poverty in NBR keeping it out of sight while also hyper-visible. Such a landscape both suggests why Whites would share a common perspective, and reveals the extreme limitations of this shared perspective—how much they do not see, or do not admit to see, from their vantage point

The chapter proceeds by first discussing the discursive practices that reveal Whites' aversion to appearing to hold anti-Black animus, in Sections 7.1 and 7.2. I then discuss the discursive practices that reveal respondents' *absence* of aversion to centering Whites in their outlook on the world, in Sections 7.3 and 7.4. Much of the rhetoric and reasoning that comprise these practices is in keeping with literature on contemporary White attitudes. In identifying these practices across the spectrum of opinion on a policy issue like St. George, however, I shine new light on the flexibility of the White habitus to uphold the color line. There exist many ways Whites reinforce the racial divide even as they seek to minimize its significance.

7.1 Denying Racial Motivations

"It's already the #1 area in the country for private school attendance," Wayne said with frustration, explaining why he had little faith that Baton Rouge's schools could be saved. The Baton Rouge metro area in fact ranks fourth in the country, and is not an outlier in a state with particularly high private school enrollment rates—but with 19% of children enrolled in private or parochial schools, Baton Rouge nearly doubles the national rate of 10%.[2] Wayne continued: "there's a reason for that, and it's not because White people don't like Black people."

Wayne was young and enthusiastic, had played a central role in organizing the St. George campaign, and evidently had experience in defending the initiative against accusations of racism. While his denial that anti-Black sentiment holds sway in Baton Rouge today is a particularly explicit example, everyone I encountered who was sympathetic to the St. George effort—and many who were critical—offered a similar argument. Given the racial overtones of the public debate

2. Louisiana's private school enrollment primarily reflects the prevalence of Catholic schools. The New Orleans metro area holds the first place spot nationwide, with 25.1% private school enrollment. Private schools, in these metrics, refer to both religiously affiliated and non-religious private schools.

about St. George, the recent racial turbulence, and likely also my presence as a Black interviewer, the White respondents regularly denied that that racism explained either the incorporation effort or social outcomes in Baton Rouge—without me making any mention of race.

7.1.1 Playing by the rules of the game

According to the St. George advocates, trying to not appear racially motivated was a part of their official strategy, evidenced by their decision to include *all* of the contiguous unincorporated land in the parish within the boundaries of the proposed city. Kenneth, a middle-aged small business owner close to the effort's leadership, explained why he believed this decision was necessary.

> Nina: Did it seem like there was already a distinct identity among the unincorporated parts?
>
> Kenneth: Well, you've got to be very careful when you draw your boundaries, okay? Because if you just go picking and choosing . . . you can't do that. For one thing, you are going to be challenged in court, and it's not going to pass. You can't just pick and choose. So, we said to eliminate any thought—which it didn't *(Kenneth laughed, shaking his head)*—about this being racially or economically motivated, we said, okay we'll just take the unincorporated area, no argument there. So we took all, what some may consider good and bad areas. We took the high-crime areas along with the affluent areas.

Residents of the "bad," "high-crime" areas are implied to be Black on the basis of those code words alone, but also thanks to Kenneth's explanation that these areas were strategically included to demonstrate that racism did not motivate the effort. Equating this strategy with being "very careful" in order to avoid a legal challenge, as well as using the language of what you "can" and "can't" do, suggests the St. George leaders' understanding that there are rules for avoiding accusations of racism—rules which they felt they were following by including Black neighborhoods. Others made this point more explicitly. Randy, for example, cited a neighborhood called Gardere that is notable for its concentrated low-income, Black population south of Florida Boulevard. He remarked: "They didn't want to be charged with discrimination, like, 'oh well, you left out Gardere [. . .], it's going to be lily White."'

It is worth noting that this logic resonated among observers (rather than organizers or supporters) of the St. George effort, too. One respondent, for example, mentioned Gardere as a "huge African-American area," and then continued, "so, there are sects that would be included, so I don't know if it was necessarily. . . " He trailed off before finishing his sentence. "I think people

just wanted to have more control over their public schools," he concluded, having avoided the uncomfortable topic of whether anti-Black sentiment was behind the effort.

In addition to saying that the effort was not about race, the St. George advocates described the incorporation effort in a manner at odds with polling that showed a stark racial divide in opinion on the issue: 44% of White residents supported the effort, in comparison to 8% of Black residents.[3] Respondents who supported St. George frequently echoed the disparaging tone of the official St. George website in criticizing the "Powers That Be" in Baton Rouge (i.e. BRAC, BRAF, and the Metro Council). Respondents closest to the effort, however, expressed the greatest animosity toward White parents of students enrolled in EBR's magnet schools. These parents were characterized as among the few who benefit from an underperforming school system. The fact that many of these parents were critical of the St. George effort, and often on the grounds of its potential racial impact, was a source of deep frustration.

> Randy: What the magnet schools are basically is the liberal White parents—this is their way to say, "Hey, I'm with the public schools." Yeah, they're with the public schools, but they're not with *these* public schools. They're with Baton Rouge High which is—it's a rose garden."
>
> . . . . .
>
> Wayne: It's always some lily-White mom whose kid goes to the foreign language academic immersive program. I mean, not that there's anything wrong with that, but it's like, "really? Really? Your kid is just getting a private school education for free." The hypocrisy is sickening.

It is true that magnet school parents had a stake in the St. George fight: 27% of the students who would have been displaced by the incorporation effort were in magnet schools.[4] Yet, this group—and its White members, as Randy and Wayne both specified—received nearly all the attention of the St. George advocates when they described who in Baton Rouge would suffer as a result of the incorporation. Randy and Wayne thus shifted the conversation away from St. George's racial impact. The tacit argument was that because White families are the ones who benefit from the current system, White families are the ones with something to lose, and therefore changing the current system would not hurt Black families.

Besides obscuring the impact the incorporation would have had on the majority of students who do not attend magnet schools (a population of over 27,000 that is less than 8% White),

3. Climek and Means, "Support/Opposition for the Proposed City of St. George in East Baton Rouge Parish."

4. Together Baton Rouge, *St. George, Student Displacement, and School Capacity in Unincorporated East Baton Rouge Parish*.

the narrative criticizing the White magnet parents was tinged with a sense of betrayal. Feeling the efforts they took to include Blacks within the new city were not appreciated, the St. George advocates retort with the same labels—such as "lily White"—they felt had been wrongly applied to them. If "you can't pick and choose" city boundaries, it is unfair that the magnet schools are allowed to choose the best students and create a "rose garden." With these comments, the St. George advocates reveal an expectation that other Whites play by the same rules of the "game" of avoiding the appearance of racism. When Whites opposed to St. George call the effort "racist," they violate these expectations and instead subvert the norm of what Kristen Lavelle calls "White protectionism:" a shared commitment to depicting other Whites as fundamentally good (and, by extension, non-racist) people.[5]

The moral outrage that emerges when the rules are violated, evident in Wayne and Randy's comments, tell us two things. First, it demonstrates that the expectation to play by the rules operates as a sort of unspoken pact between Whites. The common sense that Whites should not accuse one another of racism is maintained *transactionally*: had the St. George organizers not felt they were accused of racism by magnet school parents, they would not have made accusations of hypocrisy in return. Second, Wayne and Randy's anger offers insight into how they understand "racism" in the first place: it is located in bad intentions. Further, if one's intentions are *said* to be racism-free, they should be taken as such.

This understanding of racism as something to be either admitted or denied is also evident in instances where the pact is being upheld. A young lawyer named Chad, for example, described the incorporation effort as "a stupid and obtuse" way to address school quality. But, Chad is also the parent of a young child, thoroughly disappointed with his public school options, and had thus signed the petition reluctantly. He was clear that schools, and not race, were his only motivation, and believed this was the case for others, too. "Not a single person that I ever talked to, even when they were as honest as they could be, over beers or whatever, no one ever communicated this was about getting away from the Black part of the city." Assuming Chad was himself being honest, his comment supports my contention that the St. George supporters would not have admitted some deep racist intentions to a White interviewer in contrast to denying racism when speaking to me.

5. Kristen M. Lavelle, *Whitewashing the South: White Memories of Segregation and Civil Rights* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

But it also demonstrates the logic of racism-as-intention in action: if no one admitted anti-Black sentiment even in the most candid of situations "over beers," we should believe this to be the truth.

7.1.2 Ignorance and innocence

It is hardly surprising that the St. George advocates defended the effort as non-racially motivated. Moving along the spectrum toward opposition to the effort, however, I again find a hesitance to identify racial motives—even if respondents' understanding of the "pact" is slightly different.

Consider the perspectives offered by Baton Rouge residents connected to both the school system and to city organizations: both categories in which respondents tended to express concerns about the impact St. George would have on EBR schools and city finances, but who were not particularly close to the grassroots opposition to the effort. One of these respondents was Nancy, who has spent her whole career in the public school system, including serving in leadership at a school in the southeast when mandatory busing was first implemented. She cited this experience with authority when explaining her position on St. George, which was one of the most sympathetic among respondents affiliated to public schools. "We don't want our kids bused," Nancy said, adopting the pronoun "we" as she argued that St. George was fundamentally an effort to regain the control parents had lost under Parker's desegregation plan. Despite the racialized history this conjures (and of course, the fact that busing ended over 20 years ago), Nancy said of St. George, "it wasn't racial. It was we just want our kids closer to home." She added: "That's basically what I know." Nancy casts herself as someone with both intimate knowledge of the perspective of dissatisfied school parents, and limited knowledge of their motivations in the present day. She vouches for the St. George supporters as not racially motivated, but deflects much further consideration of the topic.

Other respondents connected to the school system repeatedly made claims of not knowing what motivated the St. George supporters, and further suggested that the supporters of St. George themselves were limited in their knowledge, too. A school district employee named Joanne said of the southeast, "they just don't know what's really available, or they won't believe it—I don't know." Another school district employee criticized the media for failing to cover positive stories about EBR but reliably airing coverage of fights or other incidents. "They don't put it out in the media when it happens at Catholic High, or in Livingston Parish, you know what I'm saying?

It's like EBR's got this cloud over it. I don't know what it is." A leader at one of Baton Rouge's major civic institutions refrained from making a disclaimer about his own knowledge but explicitly called out ignorance among the general populace: "Ignorance is the biggest challenge we have. People don't understand there's some super cool things going on in Baton Rouge."

In these examples, claims to ignorance work as a shield in two ways. On the one hand, these respondents argue that it is only a lack of knowledge, rather than racialized perceptions or fears, that leads residents of the southeast to be critical of EBR schools. On the other hand, ignorance also is invoked to shield respondents themselves. Even as the school board member above suggests parents "won't believe" the good things about the school system, she concludes her reflection by commenting on the limits of her own knowledge. If there are racial motivations behind the effort beyond what she knows, she cannot be held accountable for them.

Respondents unconnected to the school system or city institutions (the "observers" of the St. George effort) were less likely to suggest that ignorance about what EBR had to offer was driving the St. George supporters to pursue the breakaway district. In contrast to the "insider" opinions of school district employees, for example, the observers generally believed that the public school system was underperforming and unsafe. Yet, the observers nonetheless supported the characterization of the St. George supporters as oblivious, this time to the racial implications of their campaign. As a recent college graduate named Isabel put it, "they just want to amputate the stuff that doesn't concern them and build something that will help them and their family, not necessarily the city of Baton Rouge." Amputation is a strong metaphor to invoke, which Isabel seemed to recognize when clarifying: "I don't know if their goal was to—this makes it sound so bad—if their goal is to make [the schools] more White." She hesitated. "I feel like that's not what they intend to do."

Other observers repeatedly cited "selfishness" or "self-centeredness" as the motivation behind St. George. Only one observer, however, considered the *consequences* of the effort as well as its motives. This was a reporter who had covered some of the news around St. George, and who called the effort "naïve:" "They hated that they were being attacked as racist," she said. "But it's like, they were absolutely ignoring the fact that it was going to have racial implications. I don't think that they were all racist, but they were ignoring that." The reporter engaged with the topic of racism more straightforwardly than any other observer did—but still used the language of ignorance to characterize the effort as well-intentioned, even if naïvely so.

To be clear, there were many White respondents who did not hesitate to call the St. George supporters "racist." Especially among laypeople who participated in (but did not lead) the opposition efforts, respondents were keen to distance themselves from other "racist Whites" in Baton Rouge. Distinguishing the "White flighters" who had moved away from the Whites who stayed in the city lines allowed the respondents to recognize that racial concerns motivated Whites' behavior in Baton Rouge while also emphasizing their distance from these motivations—both geographically and metaphorically.

Finally, respondents involved in leadership of the grassroots opposition were more likely to talk about racism in institutional terms, openly expressing concerns about the role of racism in shaping the demographics of Baton Rouge schools and neighborhoods. Nonetheless, a reluctance to identify individual racial motivations within this system was clear. One respondent recounted a conversation she had with a St. George organizer, trying to explain to him the racialized impact the incorporation would have: "I told him, 'Look, okay you're not a racist—and besides, racism is only possible *institutionally*.'" Another respondent who led some of the grassroots opposition said, "I've always tried to always be careful that I'm not saying that race was the motivating factor, but there were inevitable consequences for race that could not be ignored."

Both of these comments direct attention to the racial consequences of the St. George effort. This is the same approach I took in telling the history of the effort in Chapter 6, rather than try to arbitrate the influence of racial fears or prejudices. Yet, both respondents also reveal an avoidance of engaging with the possibility of racist motivations at the individual level. Consider the first respondent: it is evident that she has put effort into learning about the insidious effects of racism as it operates within institutions, and she was confident in sharing her knowledge with the St. George organizer. However, she has embraced a structural framework for understanding racism to the extent that she argues racism existing at the individual level is impossible. In a similar vein, the second respondent quoted above admits that she has "always tried to always be careful"—echoing Kenneth's warning that "you've got to be very careful when you draw your boundaries." The resonance between these two phrases suggests that even the racially progressive Whites are following implicit rules about not calling other Whites racist.

A final example comes from Deborah, the social worker introduced the start of this chapter, who admitted that she had sensed hesitance from Whites to stand behind the claim that the St.

George supporters were racist—even as she herself wavered in drawing the same conclusion. "Everybody kind of came down to 'they are racist'... but everybody had friends over there," she said. Deborah assigned herself and other critics of St. George the authority to adjudicate claims of racism, claims that were dismissed in most cases on the grounds that the St. George supporters were "nice people" and "friends they liked." It is worth noting that Deborah stands out among respondents as a White parent whose children attended traditional public schools. "Don't you think you're abusing your daughter?" she recounted once being asked by a private school parent who was aghast that Deborah would send her children to EBR schools. Reflecting on that experience, Deborah shared her disbelief: "that prejudice was so strong." But she soon retracted this claim: "I don't know that it's really prejudice, if that's the right word. They are scared."

Deborah's constant vacillations between portraying other Whites as either racially prejudiced or sympathetic show White protectionism at work even among those most critical of St. George. In contrast to the protectionism LaVelle identifies among Whites who work to portray their close family members as good people, however, Deborah and the other critics of St. George hesitate to criticize Whites on the opposite side of a contentious debate.[6] This hesitance speaks to the power of the shared understanding among Whites that the influence of anti-Black animus should be denied or minimized (unless pointing it out in others to demonstrate oneself as non-racist by comparison). Even as the St. George opponents express concerns about the racial impacts of the incorporation effort, they, too, reveal a conception of racism—or, at least, the sort of racism for which an individual can be held accountable—as located in ill will toward Blacks. More than an individualistic and moralistic definition of racism, this conception further grants the White respondents authority to adjudicate whether or not racism is at play, based on whether their White peers admit to having prejudicial intentions or instead seem to be "nice people."

The St. George effort raised racial red flags in a parish with a fraught history of desegregation. The racial dimensions of the incorporation effort were likely more salient in the presence of a Black interviewer, but they also had been significant enough to make the idea that the St. George supporters were "racist" something that Deborah felt "everybody kind of came down to" in the opposition to the effort; something that Baton Rouge insiders as well as observers of the effort felt they had to delicately address and should claim no knowledge of; and something that the St.

6. Lavelle, *Whitewashing the South: White Memories of Segregation and Civil Rights*.

George supporters felt they had to actively fight. In each of these arguments, I find a readiness to defend the St. George actors as not racially motivated, or to attribute what looks like racism to ignorance, selfishness, or fear. These common instincts, coming from people with diametrical views on the issue, therefore offer evidence for the first element of the shared White perspective in Baton Rouge: the denial that racial considerations are behind Whites' actions or attitudes.

7.2 Equating Black and White

In response to headlines that had referenced the St. George effort along the lines of "Wealthy Whites want to break away from Baton Rouge," Wayne shared his disbelief.[7] "Huh? It's like, wait, that's *way* more segregated," he said, referencing the affluent neighborhoods of South Baton Rouge that are sprinkled around LSU's campus. "You stand at the top of your tower and chastise us, when you're more segregated than North Baton Rouge—which is predominantly Black!"

Wayne's use of the word "segregated" departs from a pattern that other researchers have identified (and that most of my sample deferred to): because many all-White neighborhoods have been normalized, a "segregated neighborhood" is often a euphemism for a Black neighborhood.[8] In that regard, Wayne is more accurate than most in recognizing that a majority-White neighborhood can in fact be "more segregated" than a majority-Black one. At the same time, Wayne reveals an understanding that single-race spaces are "bad." A segregated neighborhood invites criticism, and "segregated" thus serves as a useful adjective for *deploying* criticism targeted at White critics of St. George. Still, Wayne reveals little appreciation that what segregation means for an all-White space is drastically different for an all-Black one. For Wayne, segregation exists as a discursive weapon, rather than a system of exclusion that has wrought deep harm on many Black communities, while concentrating privilege among many White ones.

7. This hypothetical headline was Wayne's formulation, but he was right that St. George had been portrayed as a potentially segregationist effort in news coverage that was critical of the effort. Example headlines include "Richer White People in Greater Baton Rouge Seek to Secede from Poorer Black Neighbors" (*Huffington Post*, January 2014) and "The St. George Movement in Baton Rouge: An Education Revolution, or White Flight?" (*The Guardian*, April 2015).

8. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 112.

Wayne's comment offers one illustration of how racial difference is depoliticized among the White respondents—by which I mean racial difference is understood in isolation from the history that produced and the power relations that govern the present-day divide between Blacks and Whites in Baton Rouge.[9] Beyond taking care not to identify anti-Black sentiment, as discussed in the previous section, the respondents take care not to imply that Blacks are fundamentally different or lesser than Whites. I by no means argue that they *should* do so. Yet, in tracing the ways the White respondents work to demonstrate the irrelevance of racial categories, I identify a common practice of constructing a false equivalence between Blacks and Whites.

7.2.1 Two takes on race and class

Among the St. George supporters, the false equivalence of Blacks and Whites was evident in a central argument made by the campaign: that smaller, community school districts invariably lead to better outcomes for students. The St. George advocates I spoke with specifically emphasized that smaller districts would be better for students not only in the southeast, but also in the predominately Black neighborhoods of NBR. Kenneth argued that each smaller system could "focus on the needs of its immediate community." Wayne reported that this was what people in NBR wanted, too: "They're like, 'please get this done, because if you do, we want to create an independent school district here.'" I do not wade into the debate over the ideal size of a school district.[10] I instead make two observations about *how* St. George supporters argue for smaller districts.

First, there is a noticeable silence around the fact that there already exists an example of the kind of community school district that it is claimed would benefit NBR—the City of Baker School District. Although the city was 84% White when it began agitating to break away from EBR schools in the 1980s, outmigration left Baker with a 46% White population by the time it was finally able to create its own district. Baker is 76% Black today, with a student body that is 94% Black and 81% eligible for free or reduced lunch. Despite its small size—one-twentieth the size of EBR—Baker trails EBR as the 67th-ranked school district in the state. While Zachary

9. Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2008).

10. With over 40,000 students, EBR is four times larger than the average district in Louisiana, which has large districts to begin with. It also, however, has the most economically disadvantaged population of any district its size in the state, based on October 2016 Student Enrollment Statistics released by the Louisiana Department of Education.

and Central are regularly cited by St. George advocates, Baker is never considered in the context of the "smaller is better" argument. Only Randy mentioned Baker on accident, saying, "I love Baker and Zachary [schools]," but quickly correcting himself to replace Baker with Central. No other supporter of St. George ever brought up Baker.

It is understandable that the St. George organizers point to successful examples of prior breakaway efforts to justify their cause. Yet, they conspicuously ignore the most proximate example of the solution they argue would be better for students in a disproportionately Black and low-income area like NBR. Randy's slip suggests that behind this silence was a shared understanding that Baker—a close neighbor to NBR with comparable demographics—was best left unmentioned when praising the benefits of small school systems.

Related to the silence around Baker, a second trend in the St. George supporters' arguments for smaller districts was turning blind eye toward the immense burden of poverty in NBR. The larger silence here is around the well-documented relationship between both individual- and community-level socioeconomic status and school performance.[11] The burden of poverty in NBR most often simply went unmentioned, although Randy at one point slammed his hand on the table and announced, "It's not the money!"

Wayne's only engagement with the question of school funding in NBR was to suggest that corporate taxes collected from NBR's petroleum plants would support the schools. This idea was considered irrational, or even offensive, by other Baton Rouge residents—and not without reason. Local school funding in Louisiana comes from property and sales taxes, not corporate taxes, which Wayne almost certainly would have known from his research into the financing of the St. George district.[12] Proximity to petroleum refineries is also a severe environmental hazard for many communities of color who live near the plants spread along the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans in what has been called "Cancer Alley." Even if we put aside these concerns, Wayne's idea shows that he recognizes some financial disparity between NBR and St. George, but dismisses the importance of this disparity with his reference to non-existent corporate tax revenue.

In addition to minimizing the resource differential that parallels the color line in Baton Rouge, the St. George supporters tended to defer responsibility to Black communities for Black problems.

11. For a review, see Selcuk R. Sirin, "Socioeconomic Status and Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analytic Review of Research," *Review of Educational Research* 75, no. 3 (2005): 417–453.

12. For more on school funding, see the Louisiana Department of Education's literature on the Minimum Foundation Program: https://www.louisianabelieves.com/funding/minimum-foundation-program.

"Let them run their schools," as Randy put it. One local politician who had supported St. George revealed a similar sentiment when explaining the need for development in NBR to encourage more "Black professionals" to move back. "I mean, they expect amenities and services and shopping and a doctor's office," he said. "They expect everything everybody else has." The politician's use of "everybody else" necessarily leaves out the communities in NBR where, as he himself noted, there is a considerable lack of grocery stores, let alone other amenities and services. He further equates Black professionals with White professionals while simultaneously implying that the Black professionals have a particular obligation to return to NBR—just as communities in NBR are argued to be equally likely as the southeast to benefit from a smaller school district, and thus granted full ownership over that challenge.[13] Race is downplayed as a category that shapes material outcomes, while also reified as a category that determines who is naturally responsible for whom.

At least one critic of St. George, another school district affiliate, similarly assigned responsibility to the Black middle class to bring their capital to lower-income settings. "I don't mean to sound prejudiced," she said, going on to cite middle-class Black families as "the low-hanging fruit" to be drawn back into the public schools and back to NBR. More common among those either neutral about or critical of St. George, however, was to express support for the argument that class identity mattered more than racial identity. While this meant they were much more likely than the St. George advocates to recognize poverty as a significant problem in Baton Rouge, this recognition served as yet another way to conceptualize the racial divide in depoliticized terms.

A common way that respondents minimized race and argued that class was more important was invoking their own middle-income Black friends. A respondent named Brian cited his Black neighbors' opposition to building a basketball court in the neighborhood as an effort to show "how much they valued *not* valuing street culture stuff." He went on, "because, culturally, it all gets so homogeneous when you get up to these upper levels of income." Brian's story touches on dynamics that appear in scholarship on middle-income Blacks, who often face tenuous economic situations as well as have to negotiate between their racial and class identities—particularly in

13. Regarding the equation of Black and White professionals, it helps to note that 61% of White households in the parish earn over $50,000 annually, compared to 35% of Black households. We should also keep in mind the severity of the wealth disparity between the races, which is a major contributor to the insecurity of the Black middle class. Taking home ownership as one metric reflective of wealth, only 47% of Black households in the parish own their homes as opposed to 71% of White households. Statistics drawn from the 2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Tenure (B25003B/H).

more advantaged, suburban settings.[14] Yet, Brian gave little thought to the complexities that might have informed his neighbors' preferences. He instead laughed as he told this story, as if cultural difference between middle-income Whites and Blacks was a comical suggestion—and as if I, a visibly middle-income Black person myself, could only concur.

Another respondent, James, worked for one of the downtown institutions that had fought against St. George on the grounds that it would negatively impact the wellbeing of the whole parish. He had a polished persona and sharp wit, but also a relaxed presence. He told a story that his Black friend, Don, had once recounted about an unpleasant traffic stop with a Baton Rouge police officer. James laughed off his friend's concern that things might have been even worse had Don's Black teenage son been at the wheel. "His son's an honor student at Catholic High School. I mean, give me a break, you know?" James explained his thinking in further detail:

> Unfortunately, in the South and in Louisiana, poor folks are Black folks. It looks like a racial issue, but it's really not. My Black professional friends go into North Baton Rouge, and they don't get treated well. "You don't know anything about where we live, who we are, what challenges we face." So I will say at first is a class issue, and secondly, is a race issue. That's where I tier it. It's really fascinating and interesting.

Even as James is more explicit than most respondents in appreciating the burden of poverty that falls on Blacks in Louisiana, he doubts that race itself has explanatory power. "There is no White community, there is no Black community," James later said of Baton Rouge, explaining that it only *looks* like this is the case. By citing his Black friends' experiences in NBR—after having explicitly dismissed Don's own take on his experience as a Black man in Baton Rouge—James grants himself the authority to speak on the "fascinating and interesting" topic of whether race matters. In doing so, James exemplifies the tendency of the dominant subject to claim to "see everything from nowhere" while also characterizing racial inequality as a "fascinating" issue into which he has more authentic insight than Don and other Blacks.

On the surface, arguments such as James's contradict the St. George advocates' dismissal of socioeconomic status as a factor limits the capacity of many Blacks in Baton Rouge. Yet, emphasizing that class is the most important category does the same work of depoliticizing race by disregarding the role that race and racism have played in creating (and continue to play

14. For example, Valerie Johnson's study of Prince George County, MD documents similar efforts by Black suburbanites to limit the number of public basketball courts in their community, explaining this as an effort to keep lower-status Blacks away. See Valerie C. Johnson, *Black Power in the Suburbs: The Myth or Reality of African American Suburban Political Incorporation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002).

in maintaining) a system where the "poor folks are Black folks." Moreover, the St. George opponents and supporters are equally likely to claim authority to explain the importance—or lack thereof—of racial categories.

The naturalness which race is consistently discounted therefore offers evidence of a coherent perspective among the White respondents. The St. George advocates treat the racial divide as natural (in assigning responsibility to Black communities for their own problems) but also as insignificant in shaping outcomes. And while those critical of St. George treat the racial divide as irrelevant (in respect to class identities), this line of thinking, too, concludes that race is insignificant in shaping outcomes. In both cases, the White respondents invoke the words of Blacks, whether citing NBR residents who want their own school district or recounting stories about Black friends. But, the White respondents reveal no understanding of their Black peers as agents with their own subjective experiences and perspectives—let alone a group better positioned to understand how racial categories impact life in the parish. Instead, Black views are cited only to support Whites' own points.

Taken together, the White respondents' effortlessness in minimizing race shines light on the habitus, or embodied logic, that guides them through life in EBR: as long as the consequences of racial categories remain unseen, the color line remains intact.

7.2.2 The color line goes both ways

We have seen that when Whites in Baton Rouge deem race irrelevant to outcomes, they also tend to claim that race has no meaningful impact on one's perspective. Whites' reflections on the July shootings further illuminated this denial that racial identity affects subjective experiences.

Randy, for example, said, "Black people a lot of times in public, I would feel like they didn't *see* me; and I think a lot of Black people feel the Whites don't see them." While contradicting his initial argument that "Black-White doesn't play into things very much," Randy expressed sincere concern about this lack of interracial recognition. He spoke enthusiastically, however, about his feeling that there had been richer interracial exchanges since the shootings: "Now, suddenly—we're seeing each other!"

Many others echoed Randy by emphasizing that racial tensions impact Whites as much as Blacks. As one supporter of the St. George petition told me, "It's not only stuff with White people—Black people, they need to let go of how they feel about Whites. And it's definitely understandable, but it's gotta go both ways." A rising senior at LSU who was relatively neutral on the St. George issue offered another example: "You've got bubbles in all the neighborhoods," he commented. "I mean, there is a bubble in North Baton Rouge that doesn't understand what's going on in South Baton Rouge," suggesting that learning needs to happen on both sides. Finally, even among respondents who were most vocally committed to racial progress, concerns about the role of Blacks in sustaining a racial divide appeared. A leader of TBR reflected, "that wall of racial distrust can work both ways." He went on to offer the example of Black communities often being suspicious of new initiatives intended to help them: "I mean, a proposal for schools? Well, immediately [someone] starts to say, 'are they trying to take over?"'

My point here is not to absolve Black residents of any role to play in bridging the racial divide, or to deny that Whites perceive distrust from their Black neighbors. I instead note that White residents frame the relationship between the races in Baton Rouge as one in which both players have equal agency in determining whether the relationship is friendly or antagonistic, and equal responsibility for its present-day form (let alone its present-day imbalance). One final exchange illustrates this sentiment. I was speaking with Larry, a mild-mannered and friendly shopkeeper. He thought the idea of incorporating a new city was "not fair" and that the effect it could have was "scary," but he also believed that racism was primarily a thing of the past. He recounted stories about tensions following the advent of busing as if they were amusing anecdotes from years past. "That just goes to show you how things change," Larry said as he laughed.

Larry's upbeat view of how much things had changed was at odds with the climate in Baton Rouge when I was speaking to him, only two days after the shooting of the officers and thus at the end of two of the most racially inflammatory weeks Baton Rouge had experienced in years. He did comment on the shootings, however, to say, "the races have to get along a little bit better." He spoke in scattered thoughts as he continued on this point, explaining that he loved all of his Black customers, and that he knows all of his neighbors by name, even the Black neighbor whom he's never met. He went on to tell a story about this "older Black fellow."

> Larry: Every time I go by, I always wave, and he turns his head down. And I told my wife, and said, you know, I said 'one day he's going to be out cutting the grass, and I'm going to go over there, and I'm going to say, I've been here 16 years and I don't know your name.' Actually I do know his name, but I'll tell him that I don't—the only reason I know his name is because I got a piece of his mail by mistake *(Larry laughed)*. But it's pretty isolated, at least where I live…I bet it's a lot more common in the city. People have just got to get along…though it's so much easier said than done.
>
> Nina: What do you think keeps people from going up and introducing themselves?
>
> Larry: I don't know. Maybe they have pre-conceived notions about us…or me.

Larry takes some responsibility for having never said hello to his neighbor, thinking that he should one day do so. But Larry is ultimately in unfamiliar territory when reflecting on how "they" (Blacks) might view "us" (Whites)—"us" being his first instinct to reference, before adding "or me." When probed, Larry makes a tentative step toward imagining what the mindset of the Black man might have been, but he loses the ease with which he previously commented on how much things had changed in Baton Rouge. No longer speaking with upbeat certainty, Larry struggles to do the kind of interpretive work that is rarely required of him and to think of how Blacks view Whites, rather than vice versa.

Section 7.2 has presented a range of arguments from White respondents built on the premise that no power differential parallels the racial divide in Baton Rouge. Paradoxically, in minimizing the significance of race, the respondents also highlight the obvious ways race divides life in Baton Rouge. The St. George advocates, for example, present racial categories as irrelevant to outcomes but also immutable: the challenges facing Black communities are those that Black leaders should address. The stark segregation of Baton Rouge makes it easy to see how such a deferral of responsibility dovetails with arguments about "local control" over schools leading to the best outcomes.

St. George critics, on the other hand, reject the idea that racial categories are immutable—but nonetheless reveal a recognition that race functions as a dividing line in Baton Rouge. When James says, "it looks like a racial issue, but it's really not," he has to admit how things look before explaining how he believes things really are. Similarly, in the aftermath of the July shootings, the existence of a racial fault line is recognized in the consensus that "the races have to get along better." Yet, the motivation for getting along better is that Whites are suffering from a lack of trust and recognition. Beyond reducing the racial divide to a question of whether people "get along," the depoliticization of racial categories further demonstrates Whites' ignorance about the workings of

racial power. This ignorance in part stems from Whites' privileged position, from which they can easily navigate life without little understanding of how race functions as a category of oppression. Whites also benefit from this ignorance, however, and have an interest in maintaining it—whether in overtly claiming no knowledge of whether anti-Black animus motivates White action, or simply revealing no knowledge of the limited life chances of Blacks in Baton Rouge.

Taken together with the denial of racial motivations discussed in the previous section, the false equivalence of Blacks and Whites demonstrates how White residents of Baton Rouge make different arguments but engage in the same practices of negating traditional feelings of prejudice directed at Blacks. In conversation with a Black researcher, but almost certainly in other facets of their lives too, they operate with understanding of the world in which anti-Black sentiment does not (or should not be said to) influence Whites' actions, and the Black-White divide does not (despite how it looks) influence outcomes. In the next section, I shift focus from discursive practices concerned with negating any ill will or ill fate associated with Blackness, to practices that positively assert or defend Whites' privilege and superiority in the racial hierarchy.

7.3 The Superiority of White Concerns

There are probably few harder places to be a visiting team than "Death Valley"—or LSU's Tiger Stadium, as less ardent football fans might call it. The stadium roared so loudly one Saturday night in 1988 that the nearby Louisiana Geological Survey registered it as an earthquake.[15] The Tigers' typical 0.7 win record at home may or may not have anything to do with a longstanding tradition of greeting the visitors with a live tiger on the field (a tradition retired only in 2016). Purple and gold paraphernalia pervades the closets, lawns, and cars of EBR year-round. "It's not that Baton Rouge is 'sports fans,"' one respondent told me. "It's that Baton Rouge *is LSU*."

The intensity of LSU spirit can make it hard to believe that only 10 miles up the Mississippi River lies another campus with a ritualistic-like following. Southern University is the largest historically Black college or university (HBCU) in Louisiana. It has only about 7,000 students

15. Another Tiger football team, of Clemson University, also calls its stadium Death Valley and claims to have originated the nickname. There are a variety of origin myths explaining how the two Tiger stadiums took on the same name, and which one is more deserving of the ominous title, but LSU fans don't seem to care too much.

to LSU's 31,000, and is more severely underfunded (all public higher education in Louisiana suffered cuts under Governor Bobby Jindal). All the same, many Blacks in Baton Rouge talk about Southern with just as much passion, if not more.[16]

The comparison between LSU and Southern helps introduce the third discursive practice engaged in by the White respondents, and the first one that primarily reveals an ingroup-oriented feeling of prejudice. It is not that the White respondents are likely to say that LSU is "superior" to Southern, per Blumer's articulation of superiority as one of the feelings comprising prejudice as a sense of group position. Rather, they are unlikely to say anything about Southern at all. The most common reply when I would ask White respondents about Southern was that they did not know where it was located. One LSU alum who had a vague idea where Southern was explained the social distance between the two universities as a product of physical distance: "Not that they're close," he said. On second thought, he added, '"Well, I guess they are. It's what, like, 10 miles? [Southern's] not easy to get to; traffic in Baton Rouge just sucks. That's really what it comes down to." This is the view of Southern from LSU—not easy to see in the background, or, at the very least, "not easy to get to."

The attention and legitimacy granted to LSU while Southern is ignored (or occasionally criticized) is similar to the attention and legitimacy White respondents grant to the concerns of majority-White communities. Just as it is understandable that the state's flagship university gets more attention, it is understandable to focus on issues that matter to oneself and one's immediate community.[17] But when life is as segregated as it is in Baton Rouge, this focus perpetuates a dynamic of ignoring the problems plaguing the majority-Black, low-income student population of the public schools, or the residents of North Baton Rouge—or else strategically invoking the problems that affect these communities only to illustrate one's own hardship.

7.3.1 The plight of the southeast

About halfway through my conversation with Randy, he insisted on stopping to show me a video. "It will help you understand, maybe, why some people don't want to send their kids to

16. Southern also had its own live mascot, a jaguar, for some time—the only HBCU to do so.

17. There is an ongoing and contentious debate about the role of HBCUs in the present day, which I lack the scope to take up here.

public school," he said. The video was entitled "Behind the Curtain" and had been produced in 2013 by Local Schools for Local Children, the precursor to the St. George effort.[18] It opens in silence, with black text against a white background, introducing a montage of videos. "Sadly, for the majority of students who attend public schools in East Baton Rouge Parish, this is their reality," the text reads. Fourteen clips follow, drawn either from newsreel or cell phone footage and depicting grim scenes: most are violent fights in school hallways or cafeterias, with a cast that is virtually all Black. The video reverts to text at the end:

> The East Baton Rouge school system can no longer effectively manage its schools.
> They are failing our children.
> The citizens of Southeast Baton Rouge want to take accountability for their schools.
> Let the people vote.
> EVERY student deserves a quality education.

Despite the surface-level inclusivity of some of this language—"our children," "the people," and "EVERY"—the clear goal of the campaign is to improve outcomes for a particular "we:" that is, the "local children" of the "citizens of Southeast Baton Rouge."

The St. George supporters I encountered revealed a similar understanding of "we." Take, for example, Elise, an amiable and chatty accountant-turned-homemaker who now lives in the lush Country Club of Louisiana. A strong believer in Catholic education, Elise had no firsthand experience of the public schools but proclaimed that "public schools are terrible:" "I'm just saying what everybody, you know, from what I hear," she told me. "We never had anybody in the public school system here." Chad, the young lawyer, said it took him only a few months after arriving in Baton Rouge for law school to figure out the same common wisdom: "if you had parents that were involved and concerned, and you had any sort of academic prowess or ability, then they were going to have to recruit you into a private school or leave the parish." Chad's comment seemingly condemns those parents who *do* send their kids to public schools as either uninvolved or unconcerned, acting against what "everybody" knows. It is more likely, however, that Chad as well as Elise simply did not understand "everybody" to extend to the disproportionately Black population of EBR students and parents.

18. "Behind the Curtain: East Baton Rouge School System," available at https://vimeo.com/67358394. The video has been viewed over 5,000 times. By comparison, only two videos posted by the official EBR school district account have more than 5,000 views (most don't come close to this), and one of them is a promotional video for magnet schools.

Wayne suggested that a similar logic drove his thinking: "No one's going to send their kids to these [traditional] schools, and you don't have enough magnet schools, and that's not fair." Wayne's comment is based on an implicit divide between "them" and "us," but in which "us" becomes equivalent to "everyone." To him, it makes sense to identify the families of 28,000 EBR students in non-magnet schools, of whom less than 8% are White, as "no one." In a striking contrast to the earlier emphasis the organizers put on the inclusion of the low-income Black neighborhood of Gardere within St. George, Gardere now escapes mention. Public school attendance is 93% in Gardere (compared to 42% in Elise's neighborhood).[19] Thus, even if the St. George supporters claim that "us" is geographically defined as the unincorporated area, they still dismiss as "no one" the (disproportionately Black) residents of the unincorporated area who utilize the traditional public schools. Moreover, Wayne does not call for an improvement of the whole system—despite the message concluding the "Behind the Curtain" video being that "every" student deserves a quality education. He instead argues that what would be fair would be having enough magnet schools for "everyone" (read: "us") to attend.

Putting aside respondents' ahistorical understanding of why the school system has struggled, it makes sense that parents would not want their children in the scenarios depicted in the video. Yet, the severity of the school situation for implicitly *White* parents is communicated with stories featuring almost entirely *Black* casts—whether in dramatic examples such as "Behind the Curtain," or in the more quotidian references to the "failed," "dangerous," or "horrible" school system. On the rare occasions that EBR students are referenced directly (rather than subsumed into "the school system"), they most commonly appear as objects of danger.

Elise, for example, empathized with how hard it must be for teachers in EBR who "have so many bullies that they're scared of their students." A comment made by Randy achieves a similar end: "the students there were horrible," he said when explaining why a friend of his quit his teaching job. Randy said it was understandable: "teachers are put in an impossible situation." This was the only way students of traditional public schools ever featured in the comments of the St. George advocates: as undisciplined troublemakers, with "different educational needs," or for whom "the damage is already done." The disproportionately Black students of the EBR system are thus invoked as sources of harm, and ignored as the ones who acutely suffer from the

19. Public school attendance rarely crests 60% across the southeast part of the parish. See 2015 ACS 5-Year Estimates for Census Tracts in EBR Parish; "Population 3 Years and Over Enrolled in School: Public School" (T29).

much-elaborated shortcomings of the school system. This understanding supported an acceptance that some collateral damage might result from the incorporation effort, at least in the short term. As Wayne told me, "what [opponents] will say is, 'You're going to kill public schools by doing that.' I will argue public schools are dead." Kenneth echoed him: "It's almost like you have to get worse before you get better." Never did the St. George supporters recognize the experiences or perspectives of the students and families for whom things would "get worse" in the process of establishing St. George to offer "better" options for a smaller slice of the Baton Rouge community.

Beyond a silence around public school students themselves, the St. George advocates were explicit that their concern was for parents who have no other choice but to send their children to private schools if they do not want to leave the parish. It is true that many parents feel this way. Chad, for example, had reluctantly accepted that he would move to another parish in order to send his infant son to public school one day. "It's not what I want to do. I don't want to live in Ascension Parish…[but] that's going to be the only option." Even Joanne, the school district employee worried that parents in the southeast would not believe the good things about EBR schools, used the rhetoric of necessity. As she said of people who had moved to Zachary and Central, "they no longer have to send their kid—'have to,' notice how I say that—send their kids to Catholic schools and pay tuition." Joanne "noticed" that she had instinctively slipped into the language used by the St. George effort. But rather than correcting herself, she simply commented on it, as if to admit the pervasiveness or naturalness of this language. In a sense, this is a form of self-correction. Yet, it also reveals Joanne's inevitable identification with, or similar perspective to, a group of mostly White parents.

Vignettes about the struggles of being a middle class family in Baton Rouge often accompanied comments like Joanne's, generally describing a young couple with a "pretty good" income of $100,000 per year (in the top 14% of the income distribution in EBR); after various bills including private school tuition, the couple was "living pay check to pay check." These vignettes were often accompanied by comments about me not yet having a family of my own. "You will see one day," one observer sympathetic to St. George told me. It was clear that effort was being taken to make sure that I, as a young person and an outsider, understood that private school tuition

was an unfair but *necessary* expense for these households. Similarly, many respondents echoed the refrain that St. George was "certainly not rich."[20]

Fitting with this sympathetic portrayal was the argument that the financial hardship of St. George supporters was even more unfair in light of the tax revenue the southeast contributes to the city-parish. As discussed in the previous chapter, this revenue comes primarily in the form of sales taxes generated by people coming from across the parish to spend at venues in the southeast, rather than taxes paid by residents of the southeast alone. All the same, the St. George supporters felt the southeast had not received its fair share of public investment in return.

Elise put things more bluntly than the campaign organizers did: "We're South Baton Rouge, we have a huge tax base," she said. "So we had that big advantage, and that's why they won't let us go." Elise vocalizes what is insinuated by the effort's concern with painting itself as "not rich" but rather middle-income: they know that St. George is advantaged compared to the larger parish. Being relatively advantaged does not make it impossible that individual families face financial strain, or that the tax structure is unfair. However, the St. George effort is argued to be justified on the grounds of the area's advantage—despite the time taken to explain residents' *dis*advantage. Randy offered one of the most colorful statements on this point when he referenced the St. George organizers' discovery that sales taxes generated in the unincorporated areas went into an "unincorporated fund" that funded services across the parish (rather than only for the southeast):

> When people [realized this], they said, "What? We're being screwed. This is like colonial India with the British coming in and just taking it all for themselves!" Then people said, "What do we not get in St. George?" Well, one of the things, if you drive around in South Baton Rouge, you know the traffic is horrible. And much of that is in St. George, because the infrastructure has not been built in the southeast part of parish to deal with the traffic. Well, that's the biggest thing that hasn't been done.

The comparison to British colonialism is arguably inappropriate, but it captures the sentiment that the St. George effort was an uprising by people who had been treated unfairly. It was at other times called a "revolutionary" or quintessentially "American" struggle. In any case, Whites are centered as victims of an unjust or undesirable set of circumstances.

20. Wayne's approach was to distinguish the wealthier homes around the Country Club of Louisiana from other parts of the proposed St. George incorporation—a fair point, as it would make sense for middle-income residents of the area to be more upset than upper-income residents about the cost of private school tuition. It is worth noting, however, that the mean household income in the proposed St. George area of about $90,000 per year is in the top 20% of the household income distribution (for the United States, as well as in Louisiana). Moreover, the mean income for St. George is lowered by places such as Gardere, where the mean household income was just above $50,000 in of 2015; elsewhere in the southeast, the mean income is over $180,000.

Randy naming traffic as "the biggest thing that hasn't been done" in the St. George area points back to the frame with which Part III began. When viewed from the southeast, traffic is much like the school system: an ahistorical phenomenon, unconnected to White flight or racial inequality, and whose impact on the White majority is amplified in a manner that overshadows other concerns in the parish.

Elise's complaints about traffic segued into exasperation with the city's lack of attention to landscaping, and its weak efforts to attract new businesses—the two things that Elise regularly referenced as features of "nice" neighborhoods. She cited the frustrations of her friends who had tried to work on city beautification projects, and commented on the weeds and litter she often saw on the side of the roads. She told stories about stores and restaurants—such as an IKEA store, and a Lafayette pizza chain—that had tried to open in Baton Rouge but found negotiating with local government so frustrating that the plans were dropped. "They're just not forward-thinking," she said of the amorphous "Powers That Be" in Baton Rouge, and explained that her family was thinking of moving to Lafayette. Lafayette, Elise said, was more "progressive:" it has more museums, more parks, more restaurants, prettier streets. ("Even the races tend to get along better in Lafayette," Elise added at one point.)

Improving traffic flows, beautifying the built environment, and providing amenities are important to quality of life in any city. However, these issues dominate the perspective of someone like Elise. Issues that remain invisible include the upward of 100,000 residents of the parish who live in food deserts,[21] and a shortage of emergency healthcare in NBR, which only in November 2017 regained an emergency room after going almost five years without one.[22] Elise occasionally referenced NBR as a place where she was "scared to death" to go—purportedly because of "those people that have crime problems or just, you know, records," as she put it. Unsurprisingly, then, the needs of "those people" or their potential frustrations with city government were absent from Elise's comments. Instead, concern for her own safety functioned as a barrier that justified Elise in giving no further thought to the residents of NBR as anything more than threats.

21. The US Department of Agriculture defines food deserts as low income census tracts where 33% of the population lives a mile or more from a grocery store. See the TBR Food Access Policy Commission's 2013 report on food deserts in EBR, available at https://www.slideshare.net/bagertjr/food-deserts-in-baton-rouge.

22. The state closed NBR's Earl K. Long Medical Center in 2013 to cut costs; in 2015, Baton Rouge General Hospital followed suit in closing its Mid-City emergency room on account of losing money on the amount of care provided to uninsured patients. See Ted Griggs, "Long-Awaited North Baton Rouge Emergency Room to Open Nov. 15, OLOL Says," *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge), October 2017, http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/business/article_3669260c-b99f-11e7-8b54-078d2d22ee04.html.

As Graeber puts it, "most of the time, power is all about what you *don't* have to worry about, *don't* have to know about, and *don't* have to do."[23] Of course, the luxury of what Elise does not have to worry about comes from her economic as much as racial privilege (our conversation took place amidst visible wealth, inside the gates of the Country Club of Louisiana). The same can be said for many of the middle- and upper-income supporters of the St. George effort. In Baton Rouge, however, wealth dovetails with race and reinforces the role of the color line in limiting many Whites' circle of concern.

7.3.2 "Understanding" and the normalization of separate and unequal

So far, supporters of St. George have characterized the southeast as the recipient of an unfair deal when it comes to schools and other city services. Respondents who were critical of St. George generally rejected this portrayal. Critics were much more likely to describe St. George supporters as "wealthy people" without claims to financial hardship.

Even so, the St. George critics often granted legitimacy to the concerns of majority-White communities—for example, related to schools and traffic—while a silence remained around the concerns of majority-Black communities. This practice of centering Whites in conversations about race offers evidence of what is instinctive to the White respondents (e.g. sympathizing with other Whites). Moreover, it demonstrates the capacity of Whites' instincts to also serve Whites' interests: it is easier for Whites to have comfortable and polite conversation about racial inequality when the subjectivity of Blacks themselves is never mentioned.

For example, consider the White respondents connected to the school district, who usually expressed concerns that the St. George effort would have hurt EBR. Many in this group expressed empathy for the parents supporting the St. George effort, but not one mentioned the impact it would have had on the existing student population. In contrast to the repeated claims among these respondents that they "didn't know" much about the motivations of the St. George supporters, here the school affiliates repeatedly claimed that they nonetheless "understood" the St. George supporters' perspectives. As Joanne said, "I worked very, very closely with those people in the area, and I like them. I understand their issues; they understand my concerns." Nancy said almost

23. Graeber, *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*, 101.

the same. From these positions of "understanding," both women argued that the concerns of the St. George effort should be taken more seriously.

Nancy went further in suggesting that a debt was owed to the parents behind St. George when she referenced Parker's busing order. Adopting the first person plural as she did earlier, Nancy said: "We were left out. We were not treated fairly. That residual anger is there." Nancy's reference to fairness resonates with Wayne's earlier complaints about the unfairness of the limited supply of magnet schools. Yet, to say that the forced integration of Baton Rouge's schools "left out" the White parents blatantly ignores the impetus for integration being to include Blacks in the schools from which *they* had been left out by law.

Joanne more explicitly called for attention to be given to the present-day demands of residents of the southeast, saying, "you have to listen to some of the people's concerns, and you have to meet them at some point, at least halfway." In Joanne's view, the St. George effort stands on legitimate enough ground to be met *at least* halfway—and if this did not happen, Joanne's only vocalized concern was that EBR would lose the existing school facilities in the southeast were the new district formed. Her concern is understandable: EBR lost valuable facilities when Central, Zachary, and Baker broke away from the district. Then again, for someone with deep knowledge of the school system, it is notable that Joanne never mentions any impact the creation of St. George would have on the remaining, even more disproportionately Black EBR student population. The same silence was present among all the White respondents connected to EBR schools.

Critical White observers of St. George were less likely than White school district employees to join in the sympathetic portrayal of parents behind the incorporation effort, but they fell short of giving attention or legitimacy to issues facing majority-Black communities. Critical White observers instead collectively normalized the status quo. As one LSU student council member summed things up, "If you are a White kid you go to a Catholic school. If you are a Black kid you go to a public school. And that's just how it is." The young college graduate Isabel called the public and private schools systems "like night and day." One parent who sent her children to Catholic schools explained many parents avoid traditional schools "because they're afraid that the student body is not going to be…the student body that they want their kids to be in." Over and over, observers of the effort signaled that the division of Blacks and Whites into two systems of education was common knowledge—simply the way things are, the natural state of affairs.

At most, observers suggested the divide was reflective of race-neutral desires about what kind of student body would be best for a given child.

Even among some of the respondents who were loudest in their criticism of St. George, there is evidence of a collective blind spot around the needs of majority Black students in the system. Take, for example, Kathy, who volunteers with her church at a local elementary school. The experience led her to say of the St. George supporters, "In their defense, the schools are horrible." She went on:

> Despite all the volunteer work that my church does, whenever that school makes above an F, I sometimes think oh, how did they do that? I mean, I'm disappointed in the quality of some of the teachers. I'm disappointed in the quality of the administration. Now, I'm not at all disappointed in all the things my church does.

Kathy's experiences in this school, which led her to the "defense" of the St. George parents, have opened up little space for further thought about the depth of need in the community where she volunteers. "I'm not sure why, but [there's] a lot of hopelessness from some people," she says of the impoverished area surrounding the school. Kathy recognizes the level of poverty but puts little interpretive labor into imagining why such poverty might be accompanied by hopelessness.

I should note that those engaged in grassroots opposition to St. George largely abstain from the practice of legitimizing White concerns. This group emphasized that the real harm done by St. George would fall primarily on the shoulders of the majority-Black school population. There were also respondents throughout the sample, and not only among the active opponents to the effort, who challenged the idea that the public school system was already dead and thus acceptable as collateral damage.

All the same, there is an implicit hierarchy of needs subscribed to by most respondents. It is simply not common sense to extend empathy to Black students of EBR schools or Black residents of the parish, who instead fade into the background of concerns relevant to majority-White communities. The White respondents may not claim their racial ingroup to be "superior," per se, but they do reveal a perspective that operates on this assumption unless challenged to think more broadly (e.g. as part of a community organization such as TBR). This shared perspective is derived from Whites' structural position in the racial order, but they further have little incentive to work to see more. Much like Myrdal long ago identified Southern Whites' habit of speaking in polite and indirect terms in order to give themselves a "moral escape," the Southern Whites I

encountered were prudent in not mentioning the thorny realities of racial inequality and suffering in Baton Rouge—and perhaps even more so than usual when speaking to a Black interviewer.[24]

The class positions of my White respondents undoubtedly contribute to their constrained insight into life in EBR. Yet, when class overlaps with race as much as it does in Baton Rouge, the narrowness of a middle-income perspective only reinforces the tendency to legitimize White concerns. Although the White respondents lean into this tendency in a variety of ways—from Randy's hyperbolic comparison to colonial India to Joanne and Nancy's subtler "understanding" of parents' concerns—they nonetheless reveal a common habitus informing their strategic choices to give minimal thought to the needs, experiences, and perspectives of Blacks.

7.4 Upholding the Social Order

I have now reported three practices engaged in by the White respondents that reveal the influence of a shared White perspective. The fourth and final practice follows from my discussion in Section 7.3 by demonstrating Whites' understandings of their ingroup (as opposed to engaging with and rationalizing their orientations toward Blacks, the most salient outgroup). Here, I report evidence for the myriad ways Whites engage in a defense of the social order—an order in which Whites have certain privileges and advantages over Blacks. This deference to the status quo is produced in two ways: either through expressed desires to return to a sense of calm and order located at some time in the past, or through endorsement of the importance of "togetherness" for Baton Rouge's future in a way that admits little need for Whites to make any concessions to achieve the inclusion of Blacks.

7.4.1 Returning to order

The most explicit endorsements of the racial order came from St. George advocates and sympathizers, and primarily in the form of nostalgia for a time when that order was stacked even more in Whites' favor. We saw this nostalgia in St. George's origin story as told by Nancy, who

24. Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 37.

cited not wanting their kids bused as one reason the St. George effort had begun. It was surprising that Nancy, as a school district employee, would not be clear that mandatory busing had ended long ago when reciting claims made by St. George supporters which implied otherwise. This blurring of busing-era sentiments and present-day frustrations with the school system was a common pattern, however, among other respondents. Several supporters of St. George called busing a "mistake" and indicated that some parents still had to "ship kids up" to North Baton Rouge.

Some St. George supporters did distinguish mandatory from voluntary busing. Yet, revisiting the strategy of citing Black hardship as an argument for improving the system in Whites' favor, they tended to lament that students from majority-Black areas were waking up early and traveling "way down here" to schools in the southeast, all for the sake of "diversity." As mentioned in Chapter 6, the voluntary busing programs today are not diversity initiatives but rather a way to give students in underperforming schools the option to attend stronger schools if space allows. The idea of "busing" has nonetheless taken on a meaning as something destructive to communities, rather than implemented to rectify EBR's stark segregation almost three decades after *Brown v. Board*.

Only one of the St. George supporters made mention of the busing order as provoked by EBR's blatant violation of federal orders, rather than a destructive initiative that both motivated and justified St. George's efforts to reestablish community schools in the southeast. In spite of the St. George effort's self understanding as challenging the status quo—rebelling against downtown power interests, challenging the privilege of the magnet school parents, creating a 21st-century city—it also reveals its commitment to reasserting something that was lost.

White respondents critical of St. George were less likely to speak about pre-busing days in romantic terms, even if they shared an understanding of the order as fundamentally destructive (it is worth remembering that Black communities, too, felt they were hurt by the order). Where the St. George supporters and critics were often indistinguishable, however, was in portraying the July shootings, much like Parker's busing order, as something that had "ruptured" the (previously whole) community. Sterling's death in particular was portrayed as creating racial tensions where none previously existed, rather than making visible the tip of an iceberg of racially discriminatory policing and governing that has affected Blacks in Baton Rouge for years. The White respondents repeatedly emphasized that Baton Rouge was a fundamentally friendly place that simply needed

to quiet down and return to normal. Baton Rouge, they would say, was "not going to be another Ferguson or Baltimore."

One recurring refrain was the argument that people from "out of town" were giving Baton Rouge a bad image. These comments were often pointed at Gavin Long, the Kansas City resident who murdered the three officers, but a local politician who had supported St. George further criticized the protests that had followed Sterling's death, which he argued were led by outsiders. "A lot of people, I don't think they understood that a lot of this, things that went on—it wasn't the people from Baton Rouge," he said, frustrated that the media had put a "blemish" on the city. He continued: "we may fight, we may argue, but it's like brothers and sisters—we get over it. Do you understand?" To compare racial tensions to a brother-sister relationship paints the divide as natural, like one between siblings; but it also minimizes the severity of the debates brought up after Sterling's death to relatively trivial bickering between children.

More common than emphasizing troublemakers coming from out of town was the language of "fracturing" and "healing." Many White respondents were optimistic that in a year or so, the harm done in July would be healed. They occasionally commented on Blacks' role in the healing process. Randy, for example, said that a local Black female leader whom he normally considered "kind of loud" had surprised him by being "very responsible" in calling for peace after Sterling's death. But the larger pattern among the White respondents was to state a belief that Baton Rouge would return to its "pre-Alton Sterling" trajectory. Rarely did the White respondents reflect on what the process of healing would entail, let alone whether the state of affairs to which they hoped to return was a positive one.

While I critique the common portrayal of Sterling's death as a cause rather than consequence of trouble in Baton Rouge, there *was* a state of calm before the shooting in comparison to the tumult that followed. The question is whether calm reflects deep harmony, or the forces of the social order that allows most Whites to not have to think about the tangled web of factors that shaped Sterling's life (and death) in the first place. Sterling's death was hardly an unprecedented incident of racially discriminatory policing in Baton Rouge, even if Baton Rouge had been relatively

quiet about the issue before July 5th.[25]

One critical observer of the St. George effort, Luke, was more direct than most in speaking to the racial tensions the shooting had unleashed and his frustration with the affluent, White community in which he grew up. "Sometimes I wonder, like, am I betraying the part of town I grew up in?" he said. Luke was in his early 20s and had recently finished a year working as a teacher's assistant in a traditional public school. He expressed frustration at the comments he would get from family friends when sharing some of the perspectives he had gained over the year.

> I think it happens sometimes, for social justice. People point out legitimate issues, and they're villainized. Like if you think about Black Lives Matter, you say "this is an issue," and they say, "oh, no, no, you're hurting the social order." I think sometimes that happens with South Baton Rouge. Like, they don't want to change their status quo, and so if you point it out, it's like "you're just ungrateful for where you came from."

Luke indicates that the calm and quiet in Baton Rouge does not come naturally, but rather is the product of an agreement not to question the way things are.

A more neutral observer of St. George named Greg explained his discovery of this tendency to silence comments that criticize the way things are in Baton Rouge upon moving there from the Midwest. "It's kind of, *(putting on a soft voice)* 'bless your heart.' You know, underneath that bless your heart, there's that 'go to hell' comment." Greg's experience of moving to Baton Rouge required navigating these comments to learn what could and could not be said in polite company. When I asked if he had any thoughts about the upcoming mayor's election, for example, Greg got up and closed the door before continuing in hushed tones to explain that he did not identify as a Republican but had learned that "Democrat" was a "dirty word."

Although this chapter lacks the scope to dive into questions around partisanship in a place like Baton Rouge, Greg's comment illuminates the norms that maintain the quiet to which so many respondents hoped the city would return. Moreover, even as Greg and Luke express frustration

25. A demonstrative, though historical, example is the 1972 killing of two Black students, Leonard Brown and Denver Smith, at a peaceful protest at Southern University by state police. The shootings followed similar incidents at Kent State and Ohio State Universities. No officer was ever charged. Almost 50 years later, the decision was made to award Brown and Smith honorary degrees at Southern's 2017 commencement exercises (the first commencement following Sterling's death). See Will Sentell, "Nearly Half a Century Later, Southern University to Award Degrees to Two Slain Students," *The Advocate* (Baton Rouge), March 2017, http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/education/article_ede3aaa8-1654-11e7-9064-1bb7a09d9014.html. Another demonstrative example is more recent. Reports of widespread mistreatment of Blacks by Baton Rouge police officers emerged after state troopers from other states were sent to help after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. See The Associated Press, "Reports Allege B.R. Police Misconduct Post-Katrina," *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), March 2010, http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2010/03/reports_allege_br_police_misco.html.

about the policing of polite conversation in Baton Rouge, they are both ultimately deferent to those norms. Luke worried about "betraying" his "part of town." Greg felt he had no choice but to adopt the right way of saying things—or at least, to only break the rules behind closed doors. In both cases, Luke and Greg ultimately endorse an unequal and racially divided social order in Baton Rouge, even as they make some effort to critique it.

7.4.2 Togetherness in talk and action

The final discourse I identify among the White respondents is also the one on which there was the strongest consensus, irrespective of their views on St. George, race relations, or any other matter. Virtually every White resident I encountered agreed that the way forward was "togetherness."

One take on togetherness came from frequent references to the July shootings as "Baton Rouge's 9/11," in reference to the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, as a way of commenting on how much the community had "come together" since the deaths of the officers. (The White respondents were less likely to reference the death of Sterling.) Another take echoed Randy's claim that the races were "seeing each other" in the wake of the shooting, and cited the benefits of increased interracial interaction. Elise, for example, referenced an event some churches had organized to get both Black and White residents to "mix, and come together, and just make a new friend." As Elise described the event, "you talk to this person, and [say] 'what are your issues? How do you feel? You know, why aren't we getting along?"' For Elise, progress was equivalent to conversation, or to the mixing of the races. She cited, for example, that when going out to eat in Baton Rouge recently she would see "more Blacks than we have ever before in the White, in the White, you know, I say the White restaurant." Elise noted this as a positive change, saying she would like things to be "more that way."

It is worth noting that Elise had at least one close Black friend: though she implicitly recognized that there was a lack of meaningful interracial interaction in Baton Rouge without formalized means, she herself was not totally isolated from Blacks on an interpersonal level. But, having a close Black friend does not preclude Elise from centering Whites in her understanding of Baton Rouge's physical and social geography. And when her instinct is to explicitly identify certain

restaurants as "White" ones, Elise suggests that she sees the racial divide as more fundamental than something that can be bridged by conversation alone.

Although some respondents had more experience reflecting on and talking about race relations than did Elise, virtually no one in the sample challenged the equation of interaction with progress.[26] Some further argued that increased Black-White interaction would be the best way to move forward slowly and carefully. An LSU student government member named Mark encapsulated this sentiment when recounting his experience of working with Black members of the student council—a process that had convinced him that a gradualist approach to achieving change was the "most effective."

> It may be "progressive" to jump out and say we are supporting everything Black Lives Matter. We want to get that out there, but at the same time, we need to recognize that unity and just simply understanding someone who looks different from you and shaking hands with someone who looks different from you may be a more appropriate first approach than asking someone to completely shift their opinion.

Mark explained that he was wary of asking people who were "gung ho Blue Lives Matter" to take too large a step.[27] What he describes may indeed be the most pragmatic way to get Whites to engage with Blacks' experiences, which in turn may be an essential step toward progress in Baton Rouge. However, Mark reveals that he understands "unity" and "understanding" as distinct from asking someone to change an opinion.

This is not to minimize the importance of the experiences Mark has had working with his Black peers. "What flipped the switch for me was hearing smart Black intellectuals talk about how they view the world," he said. "I didn't necessarily agree with everything that everyone had to say, but then they made me think about it, and I think a lot of people just don't think about it every day." What Mark described could have been the start of a process of reflecting on his limited perspective from a position of privilege in the racial hierarchy—certainly a positive change. At the same time, Mark says that the "most important thing" his Black peers can do is "coming to the table and talking." In doing so, Mark implicitly acknowledges his own powerful position: he

26. This trend reflects the dominance of the *Brown v. Board* paradigm, and related endorsements of Allport's racial contact hypothesis and the power of interracial interaction to improve race relations. See, for example, Bowen and Bok, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*. While it is unsurprising that Whites in Baton Rouge prioritized this way of thinking about racial "progress," it is worth investigating on the grounds that it typically centers Whiteness, thinking of what Whites themselves stand to learn or gain from interacting with Blacks.

27. "Blue Lives Matter" refers to a movement that was formed in support of law enforcement officers after the killing of two New York Police Department officers in their patrol car in December 2014. The name Blue Lives Matter sets the movement in opposition to Black Lives Matter, an organization that opposes violence by the state (and vigilantes) against Blacks (as described at https://blacklivesmatter.com).

already has a seat at the table, and believes he should retain his seat. Mark further assigns his Black peers the responsibility (and additional interpretive labor) required for his own education, and reinforces the idea that interracial conversation is the sort of progress that Baton Rouge needs.

Respondents critical of St. George were more likely to shift emphasis from merely talking to instead building meaningful relationships that would compel cooperation and action. One grass-roots organizer named Fred explained his commitment to building civic and social relationships in Baton Rouge: "Justice doesn't just happen at Supreme Court level. I mean societies have to have relationships capable of sustaining that." Deborah spoke about her own experience of building these sorts of relationships as a "powerful" one, explaining that she had heard Black members of TBR "talk about the boycotts of the 60s and what it was like to go to school in the 50s." She added, "I don't remember the exact people…" but reflecting on the overall experience of sharing these stories, she concluded: "It's not that it's behind us, because you don't forget that kind of stuff; but we are moving on; we are there for a reason. It's like a drug."

To call the spirit of togetherness in these settings "like a drug" speaks to the meaning Deborah draws from the interracial space TBR has created. It also indicates the importance that many people active in the community attribute to the process of engaging Blacks and Whites to work together on the same issues. No one better represents a commitment to this process than Elizabeth, who worked tirelessly in the effort to fight St. George. She had huge faith in the power of showing White residents of the southeast what life looked like north of Florida Boulevard.

Elizabeth recounted a story from a previous TBR campaign that sent volunteers to knock on doors around NBR. "They started meeting the people in these neighborhoods," she said. "And it became 'wow! They're kind of like me."' Elizabeth argued that, during this process, "a new transformation occurred—and doors opened and they went in each other's homes and they shared water with each other." This transformative phenomenon, as Elizabeth described it, was not attributable to abstract ideals of togetherness but rather to a process of community activism. Elizabeth spoke with pride about former Attorney General Loretta Lynch's trip to Baton Rouge following Sterling's death, when Lynch commented that Baton Rouge could be an example for the rest of the country. "Baton Rouge!" Elizabeth exclaimed. "I dare to say it it's because of Together Baton Rouge, because we've had Blacks and Whites working together. If we didn't

have that we'd all be divided still. I mean we have a heart that we want to be together, but you need a mechanism. You need a process, and we have that."

Elizabeth goes further than most respondents in thinking beyond opinions to actions. She expects more from her White peers than vaguely defined efforts to "understand" Blacks. What Elizabeth does not engage with, however, is the question of sacrifice beyond a few hours on a Saturday morning to knock on doors, or to otherwise volunteer time on a community initiative. I by no means seek to criticize these activities or to suggest that Elizabeth or any of the other respondents are insincere in their belief that togetherness will lead to progress. The question is instead what progress means.

For many of the White respondents, progress was defined largely in reference to the way things were, either before busing or before Sterling's death. People like Deborah and Elizabeth, on the contrary, are attentive to tangible policy issues related to racial inequality in Baton Rouge: their volunteer work with TBR has brought them into debates about issues ranging from public transport to food deserts to local elections. All the same, their optimism about the work they are doing reveals the extent to which their service for the community is, understandably, driven by their own self-concept, by the meaning they get out of the experience, by hearing each others' stories, and by the celebration of togetherness in which they are able to participate. Recognizing the centrality of one's own experience of activism as a motivating factor is not only valuable on pragmatic grounds. It also points to the situated nature of Whites' experience of racial politics, and suggests that we not equate Whites' enthusiasm with willingness to sacrifice or critically reflect on the privileges they enjoy at Blacks' expense.

The optimism of the sample overall about race relations in Baton Rouge could be summed up with the words of one observer: "It's going to be really great when we get to the end of this transitional period of tackling the racial issues." With more or less nuance in their comments, and in their understanding of how long and transitional that period would be, virtually all respondents shared a similar view. It may, and hopefully will, "be great" at the end of that process. Yet, the general acceptance of this idea in the absence of a discourse about Whites' role in driving that process, or the possibility of sacrificing privilege along the way, suggests the limits of "togetherness" to change the ranking of Blacks and Whites in the racial hierarchy.

7.5 Interrogating the White Perspective

This chapter has shown that the White respondents engaged in four discursive practices, which direct attention one of two ways. The first two practices respond to the obvious salience of Blacks as an *outgroup* in Baton Rouge and engage Whites in *negating* the relevance of race to Whites' motives and attitudes (in Section 7.1), or to the lived experiences of Blacks as distinct from Whites (in Section 7.2). The second two practices are instead attuned to Whites as an *ingroup*, producing a *positive* embrace of attitudes that legitimize the needs of majority-White communities in Baton Rouge (in Section 7.3) and that defend Whites' place in the racial order (in Section 7.4).

By identifying the same discursive practices among respondents who express polarized opinions on contentious local issues, these practices illuminate a shared perspective among the White respondents that is derived from their position in the racial hierarchy. What they *say* varies, but what they *do* is reproduce the same set of practices that reify the metaphorical and physical color line. They seek to deny racism while also assuming White superiority. They seek to minimize racial categories while also upholding a social order defined by those categories. They choose what to see and how to see it—referencing Gardere and citing Black friends when convenient, but ignoring Blacks entirely when the conversation could wade into uncomfortable reflection about those Blacks' subjective experiences. The White respondents speak with little (if any) mention of the possibility that theirs is only one of many views on race and racism in Baton Rouge. Even—and perhaps particularly—Whites most critical of St. George claim to see everything from nowhere: confident that racism and race itself can be transcended, and confident that togetherness is a tide that can lift all ships, White and Black alike. Underneath it all is a common habitus—a product of Whites' privileged position, a "feel for the game"—that gives the White respondents the same instincts to be careful about claims of racism, depoliticize race as a category, legitimize White needs, and to defend the status quo.

What counterarguments would challenge the validity of this claim? I address some of these below.

7.5.1 Challenges to the idea of a "White" identity

Central to my argument is the premise, informed by group-based theories of prejudice and standpoint theory, that Whites' position in the racial hierarchy shapes their view of racial politics. Two potential counterarguments to this premise include (a) that the perspectives of the White respondents reflect a group identity shaped by their class position more than their racial position, and (b) that the perspectives of the White respondents do not reflect a group-based identity at all, but rather individual self-interest.

A common class identity?

First, is the evidence presented in this chapter representative of respondents' class identity rather than racial identity? My sample was disproportionately middle- and upper-income. It is likely that my identification of Whites' silence on issues impacting poorer areas of the parish partially reflects my respondents' insulation from the ills of poverty.

However, it is hard to deem race irrelevant to the material divide in Baton Rouge given the close correlation between race and poverty—true in many places across the United States, but particularly in Louisiana. There is virtually no income overlap between Blacks and Whites across Louisiana's parishes: median incomes for Blacks fall between $13,000 and $25,000, while White incomes fall between $25,000 and $37,000.[28] The U.S. Human Development Index gives Blacks in Tangipahoa Parish, which has the lowest median Black income in the state, a human development score comparable to that of the average American in the 1950s.[29] Even if one doubts that race plays a role in reproducing inequality in the present day, one cannot separate the dramatic disadvantage of Blacks in Louisiana from the brutal history of slavery and Jim Crow, which should contextualize even a colorblind take on my findings.

Thus, even if many of my respondents reveal the limitations of an economically privileged perspective, more so than a racially privileged one, the two are deeply intertwined.

28. Burd-Sharps, Lewis, and Martins, *A Portrait of Louisiana: Louisiana Human Development Report 2009*, 27.
29. Ibid., 15.

Individual self-interest?

A second challenge to my claim that a racial identity exists among the White respondents comes from the counterargument that the White respondents' views reflect their individual self-interest.

It is not my aim, nor am I able, to determine whether the St. George effort itself was motivated by racial group interests, rational self-interest, or other considerations. I can note, however, that a large number of the Whites I encountered, on both sides of the debate, did not have school-age children themselves. Therefore, the perspectives of my respondents did not purely reflect the views of parents who were frustrated with the schooling options available to them, or who were trying to protect their children's access to EBR magnet schools. When respondents sympathized with White parents of schoolchildren, or made reference to "us" or "everyone," in many cases these comments came from individuals who themselves would be unaffected by any change to the school district.

It was also the case that many Whites I encountered did not live in the proposed new incorporation. Granted, everyone in the parish would have been affected by changes in tax policy had the incorporation been successful (there was doubt on both sides as to whether St. George would succeed in keeping taxes low). And I certainly recognize that the White respondents drew on their individual-level ideologies and other opinions to form views that were shared with me. All the same, when White individuals with starkly different ideologies nonetheless embrace the same ways of talking (or not talking) about race and prejudice in their city, racial identity proves to be one critical thing they have in common.

7.5.2 The potential influence of performance

Another challenge to the analysis presented in this chapter relates to whether respondents were "performing" for me in the interview setting. An interpretive approach to research holds that performance is inevitable and potentially valuable. Having presented my findings, however, it is worth considering how an inclination to perform might have affected my conversations with the White respondents.

Most obviously, the care that respondents took to not themselves appear racist nor identify any individual as racist (the first practice) was likely amplified by the presence of a Black researcher in

the interview setting. The arguments given in equating Blacks and Whites (the second practice) were also likely influenced by my presence. Phrases such as "people like you" (i.e. me, as the interviewer) would occasionally accompany references to middle-income Blacks in Baton Rouge. One respondent tried to make the point that class mattered more than race by saying that just like he could "dress up and look like every bubba in the world" or could look "professional," I could "probably dress up and look like any angry African American woman. Or, you know, professional." I would argue that the responses to my race in the context of both the first and second discursive practices were valuable, bringing to light how respondents engage with race in a way that may not have surfaced naturally with a White researcher.

The potential influence of social desirability bias in general, or of my race in particular, is less straightforward to identify in regard to the third discursive practice discussed above. It is possible that the silence around social issues facing predominantly Black communities in Baton Rouge resulted in part from discomfort in talking about certain issues. This could stem from feeling one does not have authority to talk about certain things, or from having little knowledge about an issue and thus thinking better to not mention it in the first place. This is less of a concern when it comes to things like admitting to not know where Southern University is located (which no respondents seemed uncomfortable saying, if they mentioned it). But even if it is simply that Whites feel less ownership over issues that do not directly affect them, this itself is worth noting as indicative of their blind spots about issues affecting others in the parish. Finally, with the fourth discursive practice, the dominance of unity talk seems unlikely to have been a product of the interview setting given the prevalence of this narrative around the city in the wake of the July shootings. Respondents spoke with pride about their belief in the power of togetherness and their idea of Baton Rouge as a calm and friendly place.

7.5.3 The perspectives of Black Baton Rougeans

A final way to interrogate the claim that the White respondents' views were shaped by their racial identity is contrasting their perspectives to the perspectives of Blacks. The Black residents I encountered in Baton Rouge deserve more space than I can allot here. Nonetheless, they

allow me to offer demonstrative evidence of a drastically different take on the St. George effort and life in Baton Rouge.

Crucially, my sample was just as skewed toward middle- and upper-income respondents (if not more so) among the Black respondents, based on whom I was able to access. This should dampen concerns that the White views reported earlier in this chapter were merely reflective of a class identity, because middle-income Blacks would share this identity, at least to a certain extent. This class skew nonetheless should be kept in mind when considering Black respondents' views on the topics represented in the four discursive practices engaged in by Whites.

Denying racial motivations

Far from being hesitant when identifying racism as a motivation for the St. George effort, the Black respondents were often forthright in calling it so—often with humor, sarcasm, or cynicism. One respondent, a realtor in her mid-50s, laughed and called it "pathetic" and "obviously" driven by racism. Another one mentioned seeing the "rebel (i.e. Confederate) flag flying" at one of the sites where signatures for the St. George petition were being solicited. Yet another said the effort was motivated by the same "sense of superiority" that had been behind White flight since the first days of integration.

This is not to say that the Blacks I encountered were uniformly critical of all St. George supporters or all the goals of the effort. Several Black respondents admitted that labeling all supporters "racist" or "segregationist" would be unfair, and virtually all of the Black respondents spoke frankly about the need to improve EBR public schools. Yet, the group as a whole had little patience for coded language or beating around the bush. "You have to be specific about this," said Joshua, a Black professional in his early 40s. "We're talking about poor Black people, okay? We don't address White poverty the same. Poor Black and brown people are the ones [they] want to escape from."

Joshua implicated class along with race as a motivation behind the St. George effort. Many of the Black respondents did the same, particularly when calling out poverty as a major explanatory factor for the social ills plaguing the Black community of NBR. This tendency in part reflects that the Blacks with whom I spoke were generally well educated and aware of demographic realities.

Previous scholarship suggests that such awareness of inequality leads to a greater sense of "linked fate" among Blacks—congruent with my sample's strong sense of racial identity, and attunement to racial dynamics in Baton Rouge.[30] However, race was not offered as a reductive explanation by the Black respondents with no consideration of class. Rather, they almost universally identified racism as something that shaped Blacks' life experiences across the class spectrum.

Equating Black and White

In recognizing the particular disadvantage that stemmed from the intersection of poverty with Blackness, many of my Black respondents were reflective about their own more advantaged class positions. They did not gloss over the deep income inequality among Blacks in the area (roughly the same share of Black households earns less than $10,000 as earns more than $100,000), and at times respondents criticized affluent Blacks for trying to distance themselves from lower-income Blacks by avoiding the traditional public schools and seeking out private education as a status symbol. If anything, though, this criticism stemmed from the belief that it was futile for Blacks to think they could escape their racial identity. "You know, in America, race is about class," one said. "It's naïve to think that you can separate and distinguish the two."

The Black respondents also quickly dismissed the idea that the economic capacities of Blacks and Whites in Baton Rouge were equivalent. As a retired schoolteacher told me melancholically, "They are producers, and too many of our people are consumers." He linked the economic disparity between Blacks and Whites to the political one: "The people who are economically stable are the people who seem to have the political power," he said. "And when that economic power and that political power integrate, then that leaves very little for anybody else." A number of Black respondents argued that, because of these power imbalances, it was important to support Black community organizations rather than interracial initiatives like TBR. Not that the Black respondents disagreed with the basic principle of Black communities taking control of their own circumstances. They simply recognized the resource shortages that had to be overcome.

30. Michael Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 80-82.

Prioritizing White concerns

When it came to expressing concern for issues facing Baton Rouge, the Black respondents were far more likely than the White respondents to draw attention to social issues plaguing NBR, as many had grown up there and/or had attended Southern University. All of them had since moved elsewhere in the parish, but most still attended churches located in NBR and would bring this up in conversation.

It is hardly surprising that Black concerns played a central role in the Black respondents' reflections on life in Baton Rouge and the challenges facing the school system. However, the Black respondents revealed that they also were familiar with the dominant White perspective in Baton Rouge, specifically as this perspective impacts policy and politics. The Black respondents believed that Whites felt a lack of ownership over the Black parts of the city; criticized the ease with which Whites ignored the "inconvenient truth" of inequality; and argued that the "White world" facilitated this rejection of ownership and ignorance of the community's problems. For example, the Black respondents pointed out how accessible the options have been for Whites to "escape" Blacks in their schools and neighborhoods ever since integration. One characterized St. George as the most drastic exit option yet. Other ways Blacks described the plan to create another breakaway district included sad, disappointing, insular, and callous.

Besides merely speaking to (and criticizing) what they understood as the White experience of life in Baton Rouge as distinct from the Black one, the Black respondents often insisted on putting that White experience in perspective. Most notably, they criticized the St. George effort's condemnation of the school system as hyperbolic. "They would say things, like, 'no kids get a quality education there,"' one Black respondent claimed. "Those are just blanket indictments of a whole school system and all of the children in it. It's fairly ridiculous. And, quite frankly, uncharitable—and on many levels racist as far as I'm concerned." Many others shared this respondent's view and denounced that the mostly Black children in EBR schools were being dismissed as a lost cause.

Defending the social order

Finally, the Black respondents resoundingly rejected the idea that there had been a prior state of calm and order—either before the implementation of busing or before the shooting of Alton Sterling—to which Baton Rouge would return. As one said of his White peers, "those that I know, they have seen no racial divide, so they think that everything is alright." A pastor echoed the idea that Whites fail to recognize the depth of the racial divide when he criticized the superficial but ubiquitous calls for "healing" in Baton Rouge after the July shootings. Healing, he explained, requires acknowledgement that there is a wound. "Get beyond the simple and irrelevant rhetoric," he said. Words alone achieve little change, and often blind us to the fact that "this is hard work. This is real life. We're talking about things that are historical. They don't change immediately." Several respondents echoed the pastor's concerns that "talk is cheap" and emphasized that true progress would "take work."

In one of the most powerful rebukes of the "togetherness" talk that dominated the summer, Joshua directly addressed the discourse on "understanding one another." He criticized White politicians and business leaders in Baton Rouge for supporting policies that he believed were harmful to the Black community, even as those Whites claimed to want to improve things for Blacks.

> So, that kind of kumbaya approach to this conversation? No one's interested in having that. No one is concerned about having White friends—not that there's anything wrong with having White friends, but that's not the issue. No one's concerned about understanding each other's experiences. That can help, but that, too, could be a distraction, right?
>
> What we want is for you to stop doing this. Because this is hurting people. This is bad policy. This leads to these disastrous consequences for families' and individuals' lives. And if you stop that, regardless of whether you and I ever have a conversation, or you and I ever form some sort of interpersonal relationship—if you stop that, *that* will be progress.

Joshua's comments are nearly orthogonal to those of St. George supporters like Randy and Elise, but also St. George opponents like Fred, Deborah, and Elizabeth—all of whom defined racial progress as primarily dependent on, if not equivalent to, improving interpersonal relationships and interracial understanding.

7.6 Conclusion to Part III

Joshua and the pastor quoted above have given considerable thought to the nature of racial inequality in their hometown. They have put in interpretive work toward achieving the standpoint of a subordinate subject. They may not be representative of the Black population of Baton Rouge, as their educational backgrounds and income levels set them apart from the disproportionately disadvantaged Black community. Nonetheless, their view of race relations in Baton Rouge is drastically different from that presented by their White counterparts—even those who have also put work into learning and thinking about racial inequality.

I do not question the dedication of these Whites to the cause of improving race relations and fighting inequality in Baton Rouge—nor should I downplay the efforts of groups such as TBR to mobilize voters, engage government officials, and achieve material improvements for the lives of many Black residents of Baton Rouge.

Yet, from an analytical perspective, we must recognize that these progressive White circles still engage in the practices of maintaining the color line. They reveal an aversion to calling out racism; a minimal recognition of the Black-White power differential; a value of "diversity" based on the positive experiences it can bring Whites; and the assumption that Whites *can* understand Blacks' experiences, which they imply is all that is needed to make progress toward racial equality. Even at sites of togetherness where Whites seek to bridge the racial divide, they resist admitting their individual or collective complicity in maintaining the racial hierarchy, and do so following patterns similar to those used by the strongest advocates for St. George.

This chapter has thus identified striking similarities in the ways White residents of the Baton Rouge area talk about race, from the fiercest supporters to the strongest opponents of the St. George effort. The results of my analysis resemble Matthew Hughey's comparison between a White nationalist organization and a White antiracist organization, both of which he argues were based on a fundamentally similar, hegemonic essentialization of Whiteness. The point of arguments like Hughey's and mine, to use his words, is to "destabilize the recent trend that over-emphasizes white heterogeneity at the expense of discussion of power, racism and discrimination."[31] Here, then, is the value of Part III. It offers a close look at a local context in which Whites are polarized on a policy

31. Hughey, "The (Dis)similarities of White Racial Identities: The Conceptual Framework of 'Hegemonic Whiteness'," 1289.

issue related to race—a situation similar to those discussed in Parts I and II. Part III further shows that, even in a polarized setting, a fundamental Whiteness of perspective constrains White opinion.

Recognizing the constrained perspective of the most racially progressive Whites in my sample is valuable because we tend to focus on how people who support policies with negative consequences for Blacks help maintain the racial hierarchy. The analysis presented in this chapter suggests paying more attention to, and being realistic about, the motivations of those Whites who fight racially harmful policies and initiatives such as the St. George effort. Consider the amount of energy and meaning many in this group draw from volunteering with TBR, for example, and how "fired up" they have gotten. These characteristics of the St. George opponents demonstrate the importance of having a positive experience of fighting for change, as well as being able to see one's activism as part of one's positive self-image.

The issue is not that the racially progressive Whites should instead feel guilty—after all, "guilt is a luxury," to use James Baldwin's words. "As long as you are guilty about something, no matter what it is, you are not compelled to change it."[32] Empirical evidence suggests that Baldwin was right: although guilt on behalf of one's group might make group members more supportive of reparatory justice in principle, only feeling *anger* toward one's ingroup motivates group members to take action toward bringing about reparations.[33] The St. George effort and the anger it invoked among those Whites who fought it may be a good example of this sort of motivation to take action. The sustained work of TBR on other issues also suggests that many have remained angry about the state of inequality in their area.

Nonetheless, calling for "togetherness" in a manner that does little to challenge the dominance of a White perspective suggests the importance of remembering Martin Luther King Jr.'s warning about the White liberal who is "more devoted to 'order' than to justice, who prefers tranquility to equality."[34] Even as the analysis presented here offers valuable insight into the conditions under which racially tolerant Whites can be mobilized in pursuit of reducing racial inequality, it would be amiss to bring up this point uncritically. Feminist scholars of color including bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Sara Ahmed have prominently challenged the premise that anti-racism

32. James Baldwin, *The Uses of the Blues* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 62-63.

33. Colin Wayne Leach, Aarti Iyer, and Anne Pedersen, "Anger and Guilt about Ingroup Advantage Explain the Willingness for Political Action," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 32, no. 9 (2006): 1232–1245.

34. Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Beacon Press, 2010), 93.

is "about making people feel better: safer, happier, more hopeful, less depressed, and so on."[35] Besides prioritizing White feelings as the ones that matter, Ahmed argues that such a premise further re-centers the White subject by casting anti-racism as a positive *White* attribute of which progressive Whites could be proud. It may be of pragmatic value to "understand the motivations" of Whites who join efforts to lift the status of Blacks—particularly Whites like the TBR members, who typically do not come from elite backgrounds, and many of whom are relatively conservative or apolitical. However, the mobilization of racially tolerant Whites does not guarantee the subsequent dismantling of the color line.

A broader conclusion to draw from Part III concerns the importance of hearing the perspectives of the subordinated. For those who experience the double consciousness of life as Black Americans, it is harder to be ignorant of racial group interests. The Black members of TBR, for example, may be just as energized by the good work that organization is doing in the community. Yet, they recognize the limitations to togetherness, understanding, and empathy. They are skeptical of the value of Whites trying to understand Blacks, and realistic about the extent to which White interests will incorporate concern for Blacks.

An Arab American with whom I spoke made a powerful statement along these lines. He passes as White in Baton Rouge, but pointed to his Middle Eastern origins when sharing a perspective that I heard no other members of White society express. He said that even as someone familiar with the social problems that plague NBR, he has "no concept" of what life must be like there: "to be reminded everyday not only of your race but your socioeconomic status. We even build freeways to avoid those places." This comment contrasts sharply with the silence among virtually all of the White respondents around the possibility that their understanding is limited, and inevitably shaped by their position in the racial hierarchy. It also takes us back to where Part III began—on the highway.

Returning to the highway reminds us that the perspectives I have analyzed in this chapter are contextualized by local geography: they reflect the racial politics of the specific geography of Baton Rouge as much as they reflect the attitudes of the individuals living there. Whether we consider Whites' racial animus, ambivalence, or allyship—all of these are functions of people and politics, but also of place.

35. Sara Ahmed, "Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism," *Borderlands* 3, no. 2 (2004): 1–12.

We are all always awash in each other's lives, and for most of us that shared life, recorded as history, will be the only artifact we leave behind.

- Danielle Allen (2004)
Talking to Strangers

8 Conclusion

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8.1 Discussion of Findings

This thesis has shone new light on the contours of the color line in contemporary America. It has done so by emphasizing the color line as metaphorical *and* material—and by revealing the capacity for these two dimensions of the Black-White divide to be mutually reinforcing. Specifically, I have demonstrated how the metaphorical divide is responsive to the material one: the preferences that White Americans express about issues related to race are conditioned by local geography. Taking account of the racial and economic demographics of Whites' local surroundings reveals systematic variation in the influence that racial attitudes (in Part I) or perceptions of the racial

order (in Part II) have on Whites' policy preferences.

Throughout the thesis, I have recognized the inevitability that geographic patterns in White public opinion reflect, in part, historical racial and economic demographics: I have not been identifying the pure "effects" of context. More broadly, it is difficult to disentangle the influence of context on attitudes from the choices people make to live in certain contexts (or to redefine the boundaries of a contextual container, as was the case in Part III). All the same, the empirical studies presented here have illuminated the power of geographic information to tell us about the "different worlds" to which White Americans are exposed when they express opinions on issues related to race.[1]

The relationships I identify between attitudes and contexts are structural, but not deterministic: not all Whites respond similarly to the same contexts. On the contrary, in settings that could be described as threatening (per the conventional threat hypothesis), I find a *polarization* in Whites' policy preferences according to Whites' various racial attitudes or understandings of the racial order. Local geography therefore structures rather than determines White public opinion by providing a landscape in which certain factors are more or less salient. Whether the Black population share, the local poverty or unemployment rate, or the median incomes of Blacks and Whites—these factors provide contextual information that shapes the political preferences Whites express.

I have further argued that these relationships between attitudes and contexts reflect how Whites are likely to *perceive* their local surroundings, rather than Whites' awareness of the objective contents of a geographic container. In light of the empirical findings of Parts I-III, we can now fully appreciate how my focus on what Whites "see" (rather than what "is") in their surroundings has furthered the core aims of this thesis.

First, it is by theorizing Whites' field of vision that I expand the analytic utility of the racial threat hypothesis, using its logic to analyze variation in White public opinion across local contexts rather than explaining the exacerbation of prejudice alone. In Part I, a focus on what Whites see underpins my novel approach of conceptualizing both attitudes *and* contexts in multidimensional terms, thus identifying unique relationships between the demographics Whites see in their MSAs, and the racial attitudes that Whites bring to bear when evaluating welfare spending. A focus on Whites' vision

1. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*.

also supports Part II's novel contribution of conceptualizing a status threat mechanism, recognizing that Whites might see a different threat posed by the Black middle class than the Black poor.

Second, theorizing Whites' field of vision underpins my critique of the racial threat hypothesis for its failure to consider the positionality of Whites who perceive Blacks as threatening—a theoretical oversight that tacitly equates a Black population with a threat. Although Whites remain at the center of my analysis (as is perhaps too often the case in scholarship on racial politics), I assign Whites agency in viewing their surroundings through a racial lens. Whites' perspective is no less subjective than any other racial group's, but Whites' perspective is also conditioned by a privileged position—and therefore limited in the insight it offers Whites into the workings of the racial order. Parts I and II supported this insight by offering empirical evidence regarding the subjectivity of Whites' responses to context: whether in Part I's identification of the capacity of segregation to either highlight or hide an MSA's Black or poor population, or in Part II's identification of the propensity of rising unemployment rates to make Whites think their economic advantage over Blacks is narrowing. It was Part III, however, that best illuminated not only the subjectivity but also the constraints of Whites' perspective. In identifying four discursive practices, engaged in by respondents ranging from the leaders of the St. George effort to its fiercest opponents, I showed how Whites' common racial identity influences their views of the world around them.

8.1.1 The geography of racial politics

Taking my qualitative and quantitative findings together, one lesson of this thesis for scholarship on racial politics is that geography matters. More specifically, what Whites see in their local geography—along with their racial attitudes and perceptions—is relevant to the political preferences Whites express. My findings suggest the fallacy of assuming uniform responses from Whites who we consider "racist" without knowing the local worlds in which they live, and the similar fallacy of assuming uniform responses from Whites who live in settings that some consider threatening. Here, my findings are optimistic in identifying the potential activation of racially tolerant attitudes along with racially prejudiced ones. Although I have lacked the scope to consider how racial tolerance is engendered in the first place, it is a vital question to think about the

situations in which Whites who feel positively toward Blacks would be willing to speak out or engage in activism (a topic I revisit below).

My findings also offer reason for pessimism, however, in identifying the more common amplification of racially prejudiced attitudes when race is salient, as well as the propensity of even racially tolerant Whites to defend their group's interests. We might misread a situation as one in which prejudice has subsided, when in fact prejudice could be easily fanned if Whites sense a threat to their interests. Moreover, Whites' group interests are likely to be an obstacle even for those Whites who recognize and seek to amend racial inequality. These comments point to the second lesson of the thesis: Whiteness matters, too.

8.1.2 On White vision and visibility

That Whiteness matters is not a new idea. But as Audre Lorde writes, "there are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt." Lorde argues for the importance of feeling and emotion—of subjective experience—to the epistemological value offered by the perspectives of women of color and other marginalized voices.[2] While this thesis has centered the White perspective rather than a marginalized one, I have shown how Whites' view is also a subjective view, even if this subjectivity is typically ignored in literature on racial threat. Thus, this thesis has sought to make Whiteness and its operation "felt" in a new way by rejecting the neutrality of Whites' perspective on racial politics.

It is worth remembering that V.O. Key identified *fear* as what drove Whites in Black-belt states to work harder to suppress the Black vote despite the fact that Blacks were broadly disenfranchised at the time and thus presented little realistic threat. This line of thinking is not lost entirely in the research on racial threat that followed Key. Nonetheless, studies of racial threat offer an example of scholarship that reproduces the norms, language, and assumptions of the problem it seeks to understand. As feminist/queer theorist Sara Ahmed has put it, "the language we think of as critical can easily lend itself to the very techniques of governance we critique."[3] Of course, racial politics

2. Audre Lorde, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984), 39.
3. Ahmed, "Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism," paragraph 9.

scholarship often is not "critical" in the technical sense of the term.[4] But we should nonetheless be vigilant regarding how power relations govern the terminology we use and the knowledge we produce—and how the scholarly project of understanding Whites' racialized political behavior can itself be limited by a Whiteness of perspective.

My approach to studying Whites' vision is preceded by a rich tradition of Black scholarship about Blacks' visibility (or invisibility) to Whites. Yet, the thesis has been as much about Whites' own visibility as about Blacks'. After all, to critically examine the vision of the viewers is to point out that they can be seen, too—thus Haraway's critique of the claim to universal knowledge rejects "seeing everything from nowhere" and insists on recognizing a viewer's positionality.[5] In identifying Whites as viewers, I challenge a tradition that dates back to slavery. As bell hooks argues, when Whites had ultimate power over the gaze of enslaved Blacks—over what could and could not be seen—Blacks learned to appear invisible for their own protection. As a result, Whites came to believe they were invisible to Blacks, too.[6] The continued invisibility of Blacks to Whites in many arenas today, from media to politics to Whites' neighborhoods, enables Whites to continue to believe themselves invisible. Another way to think about the contribution of this thesis, therefore, is that it has *made Whites visible* as the perceivers of threats from a subjective and powerful vantage point. This argument has been made before in theoretical terms, but it is rarely supported through the presentation of empirical evidence on the geographic dimensions of threat.

That I have put forth these ideas as a Black researcher is not irrelevant. Ahmed points out that studies of Whiteness often situate themselves as making what is invisible, visible. Yet, for those who do not inhabit it, Whiteness has always been visible.[7] For those with the lived experience of being perceived as threatening, it is arguably hard *not* to see the subjectivity of the White perspective in the operation of racial threat. This critique from Ahmed points back to Lorde's comments with which this section opened: Ahmed and Lorde together indicate that the task of research on Whites and racial politics is not to make Whiteness seen, but to make it seen in a new way. That is what this thesis ultimately has tried to achieve.

4. Here I distinguish the positivist approach of racial politics scholarship from that of critical race theory, descending from the Frankfurt School, which insists on theory being simultaneously explanatory, practical, and normative (in Max Horkheimer's original formulation).

5. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," 582.

6. hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, 168.

7. Ahmed, "Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism."

8.2 Limitations and Extensions

There inevitably have been limitations to the work presented here. In this section, I review some of these limitations and suggest how my findings might be extended in the future.

I have examined public opinion on three policy areas, prioritizing breadth over depth in illuminating the consistencies and complexities of the relationship between local geography and White attitudes. Thus, the unique dynamics identified in Parts I-III merit deeper exploration. The relationships discussed in Parts I and II, for example, should be interrogated in regard to other policy areas and other time periods. As for Part III, valuable insight could come from conducting more interviews with lower-status individuals, or exploring similar themes in another setting that has grappled with questions related to school desegregation or municipal incorporation.

Another obvious limitation of the thesis is its focus on the Black-White color line in the American context. My findings would be valuably extended to the study of White Americans' relations with other groups. Studies of racial threat among Whites in proximity to Hispanic populations, or in settings with high representation from multiple groups, would benefit from an appreciation of Whites' agency and subjectivity. Blacks' experience is not incomparable—even if it does appear to be exceptional[8]—but rather should be seen as part of the larger project of understanding the American racial order.[9]

Mentioning that Blacks' experience appears exceptional prompts consideration of the idea that the United States is exceptional, too. I hope this thesis has safely avoided the self-congratulatory tone often associated with American exceptionalism—particularly given that one of the strongest challenges to American exceptionalism comes from scholars citing the hypocrisy of racial exclusion in a nation that considers itself the preeminent liberal democracy.[10] In light of the international reach of scholarship on racial threat,[11] and scholarship on the consequences of living in diverse

8. Sears and Savalei, "The Political Color Line in America: Many "Peoples of Color" or Black Exceptionalism?"

9. See, for example, Desmond King, *Making Americans: Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 2009); Fox, *Three Worlds of Relief: Race, Immigration, and the American Welfare State from the Progressive Era to the New Deal*.

10. As discussed in Chapter 1 Section 1.1.1; see Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America."

11. E.g. Quillian, "Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat: Population Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe"; Kaufmann and Harris, "'White Flight' or Positive Contact? Local Diversity and Attitudes to Immigration in Britain."

settings,[12] similar approaches to mine would valuably be tested in other national contexts.

A final limitation of the thesis is that—beyond the Black Baton Rouge residents—Blacks minimally feature as subjects in my research. I have explained the theoretical motivations behind my focus on White opinion; considerations of scope and availability of data further informed this focus. As a result, however, my argument for a conception of White subjectivity (rejecting an assumption of White neutrality) has left *Black* subjectivity largely ignored. This is not a rare occurrence in debates about race. Kevin Quashie sharply points out that,"[a]s an identity, blackness is always supposed to tell us something about race or racism, or about America."[13] Thus we all too often deny Blacks' individuality or inner life. Thus, Patricia Williams points out, we celebrate the quiet strength of Ruby Bridges for integrating the William Franz Elementary School in 1960, but think little about the trauma the six-year-old almost certainly suffered as a result.[14] And thus I critiqued Whites in Baton Rouge for engaging little with the perspectives of their Black neighbors, while giving minimal attention to those Black neighbors myself. In response, I must recognize my role in reproducing certain norms even as I critique them; and stress that this thesis be considered alongside other works that highlight the richness of Black life, acknowledging Black agency, subjectivity, and humanity.[15]

8.3 Implications

I conclude by considering the implications this thesis has for the academy, for policymakers and places, and for all of us as political actors.

12. E.g. Dennis C. Mueller and Peter Murrell, "Interest Groups and the Size of Government," *Public Choice* 48, no. 2 (1986): 125–145; Therese A. McCarty, "Demographic Diversity and the Size of the Public Sector," *Kyklos* 46, no. 2 (1993): 225–240; Alesina and Glaeser, *Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference*.

13. Quoted in Patricia Williams, "Intimate Injustice," *The Times Literary Supplement*, January 2018, 1–23, https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/intimate-injustice-black-girls-williams/.

14. Ibid.

15. Examples of such works have been cited throughout the thesis—such as Pattillo's research on the tenuous status of the Black middle class; Sharkey, Sampson, and others' work on the consequences of racial segregation for poor (and non-poor) Blacks; or works by Hancock, Threadcraft, Lorde, and hooks that explore the intersections of gender and race. Beyond the academy and particularly in the arts, we find examples of works that illustrate Blackness in its many forms and on its own terms: from Barry Jenkins's *Moonlight* to Lena Waithe's *The Chi* to Solange's *A Seat at the Table*.

8.3.1 Implications for the profession

The first implication I consider stems directly from my findings regarding the constraints of the White perspective. As of 2010, 86.6% of full-time political science faculty members in the United States were White (and 71.4% were men); only 6.1% were Black.[16] These numbers would be different if we were to focus on scholars of race and ethnic politics alone. Moreover, I should neither minimize the contributions of Black scholars both past and present, nor imply that Black scholars should or should not study race (let alone study Blacks in particular).

All the same, the Whiteness of the academy undeniably has consequences for the research that is produced—as well as for the experiences of students of political science (see my account in Appendix D), and the recommendations political scientists offer to policymakers. Consider, for example, Jamaican-born philosopher Charles Mills's pivotal *The Racial Contract*, which challenged political theorists' blindness to the fact that seeming violations of the social contract in fact uphold the racial one.[17] Mills argues that the gap his work addresses is a product of most scholarship being "written and designed by whites, who take their racial privilege so much for granted that they do not even see it as *political*, as a form of domination."[18]

Another example comes from Melissa Harris-Lacewell, who points out that most research on White racial attitudes assumes that Blacks themselves want more government support—ignoring the sizeable minorities of Blacks who do not call for more federal spending or policies to help Blacks; research also tends to ignore the large share of Blacks who prefer nationalism over integrationism.[19] As a result, research may be asking the wrong questions, failing to consider White orientations to the diversity of strategies proposed by Blacks. Harris-Lacewell does not explicitly attribute this shortcoming to the race of researchers, but she notes the greater focus Black scholars tend grant to the experiences and diversity of Blacks themselves. Similar critiques could no doubt be made of other topics in racial and ethnic politics—from immigration to intersectionality—where the positionality of researchers influences the questions that are asked, the research subjects who are accessed, and the conclusions that are drawn.

16. Ricardo Luis Fraga, Terri E. Givens, and Dianne M. Pinderhughes, *Political Science in the 21st Century*, technical report (American Political Science Association, 2011), 42.
17. Mills, *The Racial Contract*.
18. Emphasis in original; ibid., 1.
19. Harris-Lacewell, "The Heart of the Politics of Race: Centering Black People in the Study of White Racial Attitudes," 223.

Ultimately, greater representation of marginalized groups in the academy would diversify the perspectives produced in research in subfields beyond race and ethnic politics alone, and would challenge assumptions about political science as a purely objective or positivist field—assumptions that obscure "the phenomenological bases of much empirical social science."[20]

8.3.2 Implications for policymakers and places

Moving to the second category of implications I consider revisits a point made throughout the thesis: that the distribution of Blacks across MSAs is not as-if random. Indeed, Blacks' presence in the United States to begin with is not as-if random. The legacies of White supremacy, negative images of Blackness, and patterns of racial inequality in America run so deep that it is hard to distinguish cause from effect when examining how these factors manifest themselves in a given place. Research on the threat hypothesis and the political geography of prejudice therefore do not lend themselves to deterministic policy proposals. Instead, I discuss two possibilities and their associated challenges.

The benefits of economic prosperity and the challenges of reducing inequality

First, I found that economic conditions of high poverty and unemployment have the capacity to amplify the effect of racial resentment on politics (in Part I), or to lead Whites to perceive an economic challenge from Blacks (in Part II). Although I demonstrated an element of subjectivity to Whites' responses in both cases, my analysis nonetheless supports the wisdom that prosperity dampens the influence of prejudice, and increases the possibility of building bridges across racial categories.

The challenge here is my simultaneous finding that improvements in Blacks' economic status could be seen as threatening by Whites, who have an interest in preserving their economic advantage. A problematic suggestion that could come from trying to reconcile this latter finding with the one noted above is that we should simply lift all ships—striving for prosperity to reduce prejudice, but also ensuring that improvements in Blacks' economic status do not meaningfully

20. Fraga, Givens, and Pinderhughes, *Political Science in the 21st Century*, 20.

close the racial status gap. This suggestion would hold that we should fight Black poverty but not challenge White privilege.

I do not put forth this recommendation. Rather, I emphasize that reducing racial inequality should not be equated with improving race relations. The former aims to fight injustice and improve the life outcomes of Blacks, whereas the latter aims to achieve peace even if that leaves Whites' domination intact.[21] Greater prosperity for all may help achieve both of these goals—but we should anticipate a challenging road as, and if, Whites give up or lose the material and psychological wages that come with Whiteness.[22]

The images and the realities of places

A second consideration of relevance to place and policy concerns my recurring point that Whites' perceptions of their surroundings are subjective. As Lippmann famously said: we all act on the basis of "pictures in our heads" as much as the true "world outside."[23] This thesis therefore prompts reflection on the pictures we construct of certain places as well as those places' true demographics.

It is crucial to remember that it was a choice by political actors in the late 20th century to focus policy on the deconcentration of poor Black neighborhoods rather than the existence of all-White neighborhoods—legitimizing the concentration of White affluence and reinforcing the stigma against Black poverty. Similarly, it has been a choice by media outlets to present images of Blacks that reify their location in the "iconic ghetto," and a choice by political actors to subscribe to and build policy around these images.[24] Although I reference these as "choices," I recognize that these processes were inevitably the product of a large number of actions by individuals, and undoubtedly were often (though certainly not always) unconscious decisions. My point is that, much like Blacks themselves have been constructed as threats to Whites, Black

21. For discussion of the historically dominant "race relations" approach to studying race in America, which prioritizes achieving harmonious relations (but does not engage in questions of power, or the role of the state in racial formation—as the racial politics approach does), see Walton Jr., Miller, and McCormick II, "Race and Political Science: The Dual Traditions of Race Relations Politics and African-American Politics."

22. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*.

23. Lippmann, *Public Opinion*.

24. Anderson, "The Iconic Ghetto"; Hancock, *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen*.

neighborhoods have been constructed as threatening and then treated as such—for example, by virtue of being disinvested from or unfairly policed.

Accordingly, at both the individual and institutional level, we should interrogate the assumptions influencing how we talk about, navigate, portray, and govern different spaces. The research of Cara Wong and co-authors has made the point that the contexts measured by demographers often do not reflect how people understand their neighborhoods or cities—meaning there may be scope to better educate citizens about different communities, and to work with neighborhoods to present positive images that are reflective of the people who live there.[25] There is certainly scope for media institutions to put in place systems to address their reproduction of structural biases—an issue being powerfully highlighted by critics and artists today.[26]

At the same time, there are limits to the idea that telling positive stories about certain neighborhoods or issues will necessarily produce positive change. For one, a shift away from over-characterizations of Blacks as poor may contribute to the perception of a status threat, fueling the idea that remedies to address racial inequality are unnecessary. Alternately, honest portrayals of how much Black disadvantage still exists today may activate ideas about Blacks as undeserving beneficiaries. Neither of these responses are a given, but they highlight the likelihood that making race salient, even in an effort to cover it more positively, will activate racialized behavior among Whites.

Finally, the pictures in our heads can only deviate so far from the world outside. This point is particularly applicable to the issue of fighting sustained White aversion to living in non-White neighborhoods—a key mechanism contributing to the reproduction of racial inequality. Maria Krysan and Kyle Crowder make a powerful argument that policymakers not only should expand the information available about certain communities, but also must disrupt the assumption and more importantly the *reality* of characteristics often correlated with race.[27] It is one step to tell people about the good things happening in communities that are often stigmatized based on racial makeup alone. It is another step to actively incentivize people to live in a neighborhood where

25. See Wong et al., "Bringing the Person Back In: Boundaries, Perceptions, and the Measurement of Racial Context."

26. Consider, for example, artist Alexandra Bell's "Counternarratives" series. In her mural-sized pieces, Bell makes edits to *New York Times* articles and headlines that use racialized language, showing how the pieces would have appeared if not for the authors' and editors' deference to racial stereotypes and assumptions. See http://www.alexandrabell.com/.

27. Maria Krysan and Kyle Crowder, "What Would It Take to Promote Residential Choices That Result in Greater Integration and More Equitable Neighborhood Outcomes?," *Paper prepared for the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies conference, "A Shared Future: Fostering Communities of Inclusion in an Era of Inequality"* (Cambridge, MA), April 2017, 1–21.

theirs is not the majority race, while also working to ensure that neighborhood is indeed a desirable place to live. As Krysan and Crowder put it: "all of the marketing in the world cannot be effective if the underlying premise is false: that a community is welcoming to people of all races when it is not; that a neighborhood is safe when it is not; that property values are rising when they are not."[28]

8.3.3 Implications for people and politics

My final comments concern the implications of this thesis for how people engage in politics.

Beyond colorblindness

Some commentators suggest that we are moving into a new era, in which the dominance of implicit racism and colorblind rhetoric is being cast aside for explicit racism, and for explicit appeals to Whites' racial identity. It may be too soon to know—we are only nine years past the election of the first Black president, and one year past the election of someone Ta-Nehisi Coates has called the first White one.[29] At the same time, this thesis has highlighted the capacity for the influence of racial attitudes on politics to ebb and flow. It is hard to deny that the 2016 election activated Whiteness to a new degree, accompanied by stark anti-immigration rhetoric, and preceded by a resurgence in old-fashioned racism unleashed by Obama's election.[30] Similarly, it is hard to ignore events such as the "Unite the Right" rally that took place in Charlottesville, VA in August 2017, followed by a refusal from the sitting president to condemn White supremacy and neo-Nazism.

The extreme White supremacy on display in Charlottesville—as well as the less extreme White victimhood that appears, for instance, in arguments against affirmative action—poses a challenge to common understandings of "colorblindness" as a shield for racially hostile attitudes or racially harmful policy positions in the present day. In King and Smith's account, the "colorblind" racial policy alliance, as opposed to the "race conscious" alliance, offers an institutional home for many actors who oppose policies intended to help Blacks (or support policies that effectively harm

28. Krysan and Crowder, "What Would It Take to Promote Residential Choices That Result in Greater Integration and More Equitable Neighborhood Outcomes?," 17.

29. Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The First White President," *The Atlantic*, October 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/amp/article/537909/.

30. Michael Tesler, "The Return of Old-Fashioned Racism to White Americans' Partisan Preferences in the Early Obama Era," *Journal of Politics* 75, no. 01 (2012): 110–123.

Blacks). Similarly, Michelle Alexander's widely-read account of the modern criminal justice system argues that colorblindness allows practices and policies that discriminate against Blacks to seem race-neutral.[31] At the individual level, too, colorblindness typically functions as a rhetorical strategy to allow Whites to avoid sounding racist while still speaking negatively about Blacks.[32]

I do not dispute the continued prevalence of colorblindness today. I instead note the possibility that colorblindness is, or is becoming, more orthogonal to the racism/anti-racism spectrum (or to the spectrum of support for/opposition to racial policies) than existing accounts suggest. In Part III of this thesis, there were certainly elements of colorblindness in the arguments made for St. George, particularly in the public messaging around it. But in conversation with supporters of the effort, I encountered willingness to talk about race, attentiveness to what they believed was the "right" way to do so, and occasional support for racially separatist ideas (e.g. in deferring responsibility to Blacks for their own challenges). Their speech may have been power-blind, but not colorblind.

Colorblind speech occasionally appeared throughout the rest of the sample, but did not overlap with ways of thinking about the St. George issue or other matters of racial politics. My findings may reflect the heritage of Whites in the South knowing how to be comfortable in close proximity to Blacks while maintaining social distance, or respondents' reactions to me as a Black interviewer. But what both of these caveats indicate is that in a setting where race is always salient, colorblindness is a less dominant rhetorical strategy, even if it remains an influential policy framework. As race has become considerably more salient in the contemporary United States, we may see increasing numbers of Whites abandoning habits of colorblind speech to express more explicit animus.

At the same time, we may also see more Whites abandoning colorblindness to express explicit affinity. These are the Whites who would respond to the increased salience of race with interest in learning more and reflecting on their own racial privileges. Indeed, this thesis has identified a number of ways in which racially tolerant attitudes are activated along with racially prejudiced ones. However, I have warned of the limitations to these findings. I will not repeat what I have said in the conclusion to Part III (Chapter 7 Section 7.6), that we should not confuse declarations of anti-racism—or expressed commitments to fighting racism—with anti-racism

31. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, 2012).
32. Bonilla-Silva, "The Linguistics of Color Blind Racism: How to Talk Nasty about Blacks without Sounding 'Racist'."

itself. Taking stock of the larger thesis, I instead emphasize that we should also be careful not to confuse tolerance with anti-racism.

This is why I called the Whites with low levels of traditional prejudice or racial resentment in Parts I and II racially "tolerant," rather than necessarily racially "progressive" or "liberal"—the latter terms both implying more active criticism of racial injustice than simply tolerating difference. To draw on political theorist Wendy Brown's critique of tolerance: we often praise tolerance as a moral good while ignoring the history and power relations that produced and sustain the very differences that need to be tolerated.[33] Many Whites in the samples I analyze may in fact go beyond tolerance to express more assertive, positive views about Blacks. Yet, as Part III showed, an absence of negative views about Blacks can easily coexist with ingroup-oriented feelings of prejudice—a sense of superiority, and a feeling of entitlement.

Tolerance is certainly preferable to prejudice. My critique of racially tolerant Whites should not distract from the greater dangers posed by Whites who are shedding colorblindness for explicit racism, or from the dangers posed by subtle racial resentment. Neither do I aim to discourage Whites from engaging in the political project of fighting racism and its harms. We need them—and their political, social, and economic capital—to have much hope of fundamentally reshaping the racial order. It is because we need them that I warn against congratulating oneself for being tolerant, rather than critically and continually reflecting on whether one is pushing toward justice.

Beyond complacency

The idea of self-congratulation takes us, at last, back to where the thesis began: on a hot Wednesday afternoon in July 2016, when I was attending a vigil for Alton Sterling and the fallen officers at LSU. Among the chorus calling for unity and healing, one of the White student speakers boldly proclaimed that he had faith in his fellow students to take up this charge. As he put it: "complacency is not in the LSU student's vocabulary."

To be complacent is to be uncritically or even smugly self-satisfied. I got the sense that the student speaker was using complacency as a synonym for passivity, without appreciating self-satisfaction as part of complacency's technical definition. Either way, my initial reaction to

33. Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*, 15.

his comment was skepticism: is complacent not the perfect word to describe many White LSU students, as well as many Whites in Baton Rouge and the United States more generally?

Upon further thought, I decided that complacency was perhaps not *the* perfect word. There was a tone of self-congratulation at the LSU vigil—just as self-satisfaction describes how many Whites would reflect on the justness of how they have acquired the wages of Whiteness, or the goodness of their own interactions with Blacks. But this is clearly not the whole story, and the many contours of White attitudes traced in this thesis indicate the fallacy of settling on a single word in the first place.

The White student's words nonetheless provoke the question: what words *should* be in the LSU student's vocabulary? In Whites' vocabulary? In everyone's?

One word, I suggest, is "responsibility." I refer less to a sense of duty to address one's individual wrongs than to a sense of *political* responsibility, as Iris Marion Young conceptualizes it: a more positive and forward-looking duty to "bring about results, [which] thus depends on the actions of everyone who is in a position to contribute to the results."[34] A sense of political responsibility should compel all of us to reflect critically on our actions and attitudes: to do the difficult work of stepping away from ourselves and the places and behaviors that feel most comfortable to us, to question how our perspectives and experiences have been socially constructed, and to refuse to rely on a single perspective.[35]

Young captures the kind of responsibility Baldwin invokes when he says, on the topic of the Negro problem, "[a]ppearances to the contrary, no one in America escapes its effects and everyone in America bears some responsibility for it."[36] Young and Baldwin both recognize we have different kinds and degrees of responsibility depending on our structural position. But, at the end of a thesis that has focused primarily on Whites, it is worth ending with a recognition that the political and institutional structures that support the racial order are bigger than the actions and attitudes of individual White Americans. A host of factors—from the complexities of American federalism[37] to

34. Iris Marion Young, "Political Responsibility and Structural Injustice: The Lindley Lecture," *University of Kansas, Department of Philosophy*, 2003, 13.

35. For discussion of how the insights of standpoint theory and critical race theory should inform our epistemic interactions, see José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

36. James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, vol. 39 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 8.

37. Among the broad scholarship on federalism: insight on the pre-New Deal origins of cooperative federalism comes from Kimberly S. Johnson, *Governing the American State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); insight on how the "federalization" of racial policy issues makes them vulnerable to manipulation by political interests that are distant from the experience of poverty or crime at the local level comes from Lisa L. Miller, *The Perils of Federalism: Race, Poverty, and the Politics of Crime Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

the realities of path dependency[38] to the reproduction of racially prejudicial attitudes and behaviors by non-Whites[39]—join White attitudes in sustaining the racial order. One consequence of this is that, while Whites may have played the dominant role in constructing the Negro problem, more of us than Whites alone have a role to play in deconstructing and de-problematizing it.

Clearly, critical reflection on our own actions and beliefs is not the whole solution. But as Elizabeth Anderson points out, people talk before they vote.[40] And, as Danielle Allen points out in the quote that opened this chapter, our relationships and interactions will be as much a part of our legacies as anything else we leave behind. Allen does not call for a superficial, "interracial buddy movies" style of friendship. Rather, she refers to friendship, and interaction more generally, as a political practice: actions that constitute not only our relationships but also our institutions and societies.[41] Thus, Anderson and Allen—and I, too—call not for a "kumbaya" approach to our relationships, but rather for commitment, self-consciousness, and willingness to change. At minimum, we should be conscious of the spaces we occupy and the people with whom we surround ourselves; the discourses we reproduce and the ideas we take for granted; and how often we cross our boundaries of comfort—to talk across the racial divide, to reflect on our own roles in the racial order, and to accept our responsibilities to play a part in whatever change is going to come.

38. See, for example, Paul Pierson, "When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change," *World Politics* 45, no. 04 (1993): 595–628.

39. One example is of this is the aversion non-Black racial minorities often exhibit to living near Blacks; see Flores and Lobo, "The Reassertion of a Black/Non-Black Color Line: The Rise in Integrated Neighborhoods Without Blacks in New York City, 1970-2010." A much broader conversation that I lack scope to take up is how Blacks themselves have participated in or supported the creation of racialized systems. An example that captures the complexity of this phenomenon is Michael Javen Fortner, *Black Silent Majority: The Rockefeller Drug Laws and the Politics of Punishment* (Harvard University Press, 2015).

40. Elizabeth Anderson, "The Epistemology of Democracy," *Episteme: A Journal of Social Epistemology* 3, no. 1 (2006): 9-11.

41. Danielle S Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v. Board of Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), XXI.

Appendices

A

Measures and Models

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This appendix discusses the measures and models that drive my quantitative analysis. I first report descriptive statistics from both Part I and Part II. I then offer a summary of Whites' responses to the GSS questions used to construct my racial attitude measures. Finally, I report the models used to estimate White preferences as they vary across context.

A.1 Descriptive Statistics

A.1.1 Descriptive statistics from Part I

Table A.1: Individual-Level Variables in Part I

Continuous Variables	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**Range**
Racial Resentment	5.65	2.48	0-10
Laziness Stereotype	5.31	1.31	0-10
Age (years)	47.28	17.58	18-89
Education (years)	13.75	2.82	2-20
Income	$55,271	$45,162	$517- 166,419
Categorical Variables			
Party Identification	634 Democrat; 299 Independent 597 Republican		
Gender	723 male; 846 female		
Marital Status	741 married; 828 unmarried		

Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 1,569).

Table A.2: Contextual Variables in Part I

	U.S. Mean	**Sample Mean**	**Std. Dev**	**Range**
MSA % Black	10.59%	13.17%	10.55	0.58-45.38%
MSA Central City Poverty Rate	17.54%	17.66%	5.52	3.03-35.50%
County % Black	9.13%	14.00%	13.67	0.20-68.80%
County Poverty Rate	11.57%	11.36%	4.33	2.90-27.90%
Racial Segregation (wXb)	7.17	7.33	6.02	0.57-33.55
Income Segregation (PnPoor)	0.09	0.13	0.06	0.00-0.26

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and US2010 Project (n = 95 MSAs).

A.1.2 Descriptive statistics from Part II

Table A.3: Individual-Level Variables in Part II

Continuous Variables	**Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**Range**
Racial Resentment	6.39	2.37	0-10
Laziness Stereotype	5.53	1.12	0-10
Perceptions of BRS	3.96	1.05	0-8.3
Age (years)	51.14	17.16	18-89
Education (years)	14.24	2.73	0-20
Income	$59,992	$46,221	$400-180,000
Categorical Variables			
Party ID	425 Democrat; 182 Independent 473 Republican		
Gender	477 male; 630 female		
Marital Status	573 married; 533 unmarried		

Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey Panel (n = 1,107).

Table A.4: Contextual Variables in Part II

	U.S. Mean[†]	**Sample Mean**	**Std. Dev.**	**Range**
MSA % Black	12.60%	11.55%	9.74	0.11-44.20%
Racial Segregation (wXb)	5.88	7.53	5.45	0.58-29.01
Median Income				
Black Householder	$35,194	$38,177	$11,126	$17,536-86,981
White Householder	$54,999	$62,332	$14,332	$35,748-104,401
Black-White Income Gap	$19,805	$25,075	$10,238	$-23,133-64,080 [‡]
Unemployment Rates				
2006	4.70%	4.50%	0.90	2.9-7.7%
2007	5.80%	5.70%	1.20	3.2-10.6%
2008	9.40%	9.20%	2.00	4.1-17.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, US2010 Project, and Bureau of Labor Statistics (n = 117 MSAs).
[†] National averages of Black population size and median incomes are taken from the ACS 2010 5-year data for the entire U.S. The national average of the exposure index reflects all MSAs in the U.S. National unemployment measures reflect rates as of July of 2006, 2008, and 2010.
[‡] The occasional instances where the Black-White income gap is negative (representing Black incomes being higher) are almost exclusively those where Blacks make up very small percentages of the population. Measurement error in the 1-year ACS data may also be at play; see footnote 17 in Chapter 5.1.3.

A.2 Racial Attitudes in the GSS, 2000-2010

In Table A.5, I summarize the racial attitudes variables used in both Part I and Part II.

Table A.5: Racial Attitude Variables in Parts I and II

	Percentage Agreeing	
	2000 Survey	*2006-2010 Panel*
(1) Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.	75.15%	72.60%
On the average African-Americans have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are:		
(2) Mainly due to discrimination?	32.60%	28.30%
(3) Because most African-Americans have less in-born ability to learn?	11.60%	7.74%
(4) Because most African-Americans just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves up out of poverty?	48.40%	46.63%
(5) Do people in these groups tend to be unintelligent?		
Whites	6.70%	7.13%
Blacks	22.30%	13.48%
(6) Do people in these groups tend to be lazy?		
Whites	8.80%	9.99%
Blacks	35.10%	30.94%

Source: 2000 General Social Survey (n = 1,569) and 2006-2010 General Social Survey Panel (n =1,107). Agreement determined by a response of "agree" or "strongly agree" to Question 1, a "yes" response to Questions 2-4, and a response > 4 on a 1-7 scale to Questions 5 and 6.

A.3 Models

A.3.1 Modeling Whites' welfare preferences

I use binary logistic regression to estimate Whites' welfare preferences. The outcome variable is a binary measure capturing the belief that "too much" is spent on welfare.

$$\begin{aligned} \textit{Welfare} = \alpha \quad &+ \quad \beta_1(\textit{laziness stereotype}) + \beta_2(\textit{\% Black}) + \beta_3(\textit{laziness stereotype * \% Black}) \\ &+ \quad \beta_4(\textit{poverty rate}) + \mathbf{Xb} + u \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha \quad &+ \quad \beta_1(\textit{racial resentment}) + \beta_2(\textit{poverty rate}) + \beta_3(\textit{ racial resentment * poverty rate}) \\ &+ \quad \beta_4(\textit{\% Black}) + \mathbf{Xb} + u \end{aligned}$$

where α is the intercept, $\mathbf{Xb}$ is a matrix of the rest of the control variables and their coefficients, and u is the error term. The same models are used when I substitute measures of racial and income segregation for Black population share and poverty rate.

A.3.2 Modeling perceptions of BRS

I use random effects GLS regression to estimate Whites' perceptions of BRS. The outcome variable reflects the difference between respondents' placement of Blacks and Whites on a scale ranging from "poor" at 1 to "rich" at 7, rescaled between 0-10; higher values represent higher relative status.

$$\begin{aligned} \textit{Perceptions of BRS}_{it} = \alpha \quad &+ \quad \beta_1(\textit{laziness stereotype})_{it} + \beta_2(\textit{B-W income gap})_{it} + \beta_3(\textit{\% Black})_{it} \\ &+ \quad \mathbf{X_{it}b} + u_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} = \alpha \quad &+ \quad \beta_1(\textit{laziness stereotype})_{it} + \beta_2(\textit{B-W income gap})_{it} + \beta_3(\textit{racial segregation})_{it} \\ &+ \quad \mathbf{X_{it}b} + u_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} = \alpha \quad &+ \quad \beta_1(\textit{laziness stereotype})_{it} + \beta_2(\textit{B-W income gap})_{it} + \beta_3(\textit{\% Black})_{it} \\ &+ \quad \beta_4(\textit{unemployment rate})_{it} + \mathbf{X_{it}b} + u_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} = \alpha \quad &+ \quad \beta_1(\textit{laziness stereotype})_{it} + \beta_2(\textit{B-W income gap})_{it} + \beta_3(\textit{\% Black})_{it} \\ &+ \quad \beta_4(\Delta\textit{unemployment rate})_{it} + \mathbf{X_{it}b} + u_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \end{aligned}$$

where i indexes individuals, t indexes years of the GSS panel, α is the intercept, $\mathbf{X_{it}b}$ is a matrix of the rest of the control variables and their coefficients, u_{it} is the between-individual error term, and ϵ_{it} is the within-individual error term.

A.3.3 Modeling affirmative action preferences

I use two models to estimate Whites' affirmative action preferences. An ordered logistic model with random effects is used to estimate the probability of Whites' affirmative action preferences when the variable is coded to range from "strongly oppose" at 4 to "strongly support" at 1. A linear probability model is used to incorporate fixed effects, with the outcome variable coded as a binary outcome ("oppose" = 1).

Random effects

$$\begin{aligned} \textit{AffrmAct}^*_{it} = \alpha &+ \beta_1(\textit{racial resentment})_{it} + \beta_2(\textit{perceptions of BRS})_{it} + \mathbf{X_{it}b} + u_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \\ = \alpha &+ \beta_1(\textit{racial resentment})_{it} + \beta_2(\textit{perceptions of BRS})_{it} + \beta_3(\textit{Black med. income})_{it} \\ &+ \mathbf{X_{it}b} + u_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \\ = \alpha &+ \beta_1(\textit{racial resentment})_{it} + \beta_2(\textit{perceptions of BRS})_{it} + \beta_3(\textit{Black med. income})_{it} \\ &+ \beta_4(\textit{perceptions of BRS * Black med. income})_{it} + \mathbf{X_{it}b} + u_{it} + \epsilon_{it} \end{aligned}$$

where i indexes individuals, t indexes years of the GSS panel, $\mathbf{X_{it}b}$ is a matrix of the rest of the control variables and their coefficients, u_{it} is the between-individual error term, and ϵ_{it} is the within-individual error term.

$$\textit{AffrmAct}_{it} = \left\{ \begin{array}{c} 1 \text{ if } \textit{AffrmAct}^*_{it} \leqq \tau_1 \\ 2 \text{ if } \tau_1 < \textit{AffrmAct}^*_{it} \leqq \tau_2 \\ 3 \text{ if } \tau_2 < \textit{AffrmAct}^*_{it} \leqq \tau_3 \\ 4 \text{ if } \tau_3 < \textit{AffrmAct}^*_{it} \leqq \tau_4 \end{array} \right\}$$

where τ is the threshold.

Fixed effects

$$\begin{aligned} \textit{AffrmAct}_{it} = \alpha_i &+ \beta_1(\textit{racial resentment})_{it} + \beta_2(\textit{perceptions of BRS})_{it} + \mathbf{X_{it}b} + \epsilon_{it} \\ = \alpha &+ \beta_1(\textit{racial resentment})_{it} + \beta_2(\textit{perceptions of BRS})_{it} + \beta_3(\textit{Black med. income})_{it} \\ &+ \mathbf{X_{it}b} + \epsilon_{it} \end{aligned}$$

where i indexes individuals, t indexes years of the GSS panel, α_i is the intercept for each individual, $\mathbf{X_{it}b}$ is a matrix of the rest of the control variables and their coefficients, and ϵ_{it} is the error term.

B

Possible Confounders of Contextual Analyses

Contents

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This appendix reports the results of tests conducted to ensure that my results in Part I and Part II are not biased due to confounding factors.

B.1 Reexamining the Results of Part I

I begin by taking a closer look at my analysis in Part I. First, I validate my decision to pose racial attitudes as exogenous to context. Second, I consider whether variation I identify in the expression of racialized welfare preferences between MSAs in fact reflects state or regional culture. Third, I offer an iteration of Part I's main models showing that the results are not sensitive to where the lines of an MSA are drawn, finding similar results when locating respondents in counties instead.

B.1.1 Are racial attitudes themselves predicted by context?

Some applications of the threat hypothesis argue that a greater minority presence increases the expression of prejudice among majority group members, posing animus itself rather than vote choice or policy preferences as the dependent variable.[1] My analysis in Part I instead assumes that racial attitudes (e.g. traditional prejudice or racial resentment) are exogenous to the settings in which people live. This assumption is imperfect, but with policy preferences as the outcome variable, it would be futile to investigate the predictive power of context without controlling for individuals' orientations toward Blacks.[2]

To support my contention that it is appropriate to control for racial attitudes in the same models as contextual variables (e.g. Black population share and poverty rates), this section demonstrates that the effects of context on the racial attitude variables are minimal in the 2000 GSS sample, evidenced by the results of ordinary linear regression in Table B.1 (clustering standard errors by MSA).

A unit increase in percent Black predicts an increase of 0.03 on the 0-10 racial resentment scale ($p < 0.01$). Beyond this small effect, Black population share is not significantly related to the Black laziness scale, and poverty rate is not significantly related to either of the two racial attitude variables.

I conclude that the predicted effect of Black population share on racial resentment is not large enough to bias my results when controlling for context and racial attitudes together. Furthermore, even if levels of racial resentment are slightly higher in more diverse contexts, the fact that economic rather than racial geography is predicted to amplify the effect of racial resentment on welfare preferences dampens concerns about endogeneity in the racial resentment models.

B.1.2 Regional and state culture and welfare preferences

Next, in Table B.2 I present two approaches to accounting for regional and state-level characteristics that are shared across MSAs. This analysis seeks to ensure that the results I identify

1. For example, Quillian, "Prejudice as a Response to Perceived Group Threat: Population Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe"

2. See, for a similar approach, Branton and Jones, "Reexamining Racial Attitudes: The Conditional Relationship between Diversity and Socioeconomic Environment."

Table B.1: Effect of Racial Context on Racial Attitudes

	(1) Dep. Var.: Laziness Stereotype	(2) Dep. Var.: Racial Resentment
Percent Black	0.00689	0.0286***
	(0.005)	(0.010)
Poverty Rate	0.0118	0.00355
	(0.008)	(0.022)
Age	0.0125***	0.0142**
	(0.003)	(0.005)
Gender	0.0948	0.356**
	(0.083)	(0.145)
Marital Status	0.0328	0.165
	(0.090)	(0.195)
Education (years)	-0.0734***	-0.230***
	(0.020)	(0.038)
Income (thous.)	0.000107	-0.00323
	(0.001)	(0.002)
Independent	0.100	0.406*
	(0.114)	(0.238)
Republican	0.0876	1.077***
	(0.095)	(0.226)
Constant	5.316***	7.193***
	(0.328)	(0.794)
Observations	1051	728
MSAs	95	93
R-sq.	0.0678	0.151

Standard errors in parentheses; Table reports results of OLS regression
Source: 2000 General Social Survey; Party base category is Democrat
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

at the MSA level do not simply reflect differences across states or regions.

The first two models include dummy variables for the region in which each MSA is located in order to control for regional culture or regional patterns of opinion. The third and fourth models instead take a hierarchical approach. With multilevel models that nest MSAs within states, I examine whether there is considerable error variance between states, which would suggest a need for further investigation into state-level variables.

Across the models, the core interactions between attitudes and context remain significant. Orientations toward Blacks as well as ideas about welfare spending may reflect cultural differences across the country—but, after accounting for these, features of local context remain predictive of

the strength of the relationship between racial attitudes and welfare preferences.

B.1.3 County-level predictors of welfare preferences

To conclude this section, I report the results of analysis with county-level measures of Black population share and poverty rate to ensure that my results are not purely the product of how MSA boundaries are drawn. I have defended my focus on the MSA (or MD when applicable) on the grounds that urban residents are likely to cross county lines in their daily activities and also be aware of populations in neighboring counties. However, counties are similar to MSAs as mid-size containers, and county-level data should produce similar results.

Table B.3 presents the results of this analysis. The interactions between both measures of racial geography (either Black population share or racial segregation) and the laziness stereotype hold when measuring context at the county level. The interaction between income segregation and racial resentment also remains significant. The interaction between racial resentment and county poverty rate, however, is no longer significant ($p = 0.107$). This result is consistent with the reasoning behind my incorporation of central city poverty rates in the main analysis. It is possible that sorting within an MSA produces variation in poverty rates among the counties that comprise the MSA. Despite this sorting, we would expect metropolitan area residents to have a general awareness of visible, central city poverty.

B.2 Reexamining the Results of Part II

The second half of this appendix extends the above discussion to the analysis presented in Part II.

B.2.1 Investigating the traditional threat hypothesis in Part II

To briefly restate the issue: traditional applications of the threat hypothesis suggest that anti-Black prejudice is greater in settings with a larger Black presence. Is this the case in Part II? In Table

Table B.2: Controlling for Regional and State-Level Characteristics

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Opposition to Welfare	Regional Dummy Variables		Nested in States	
Contextual Variables				
Percent Black (log)	0.405**	1.141	0.436**	1.015
	(0.143)	(0.150)	(0.171)	(0.120)
Poverty Rate	1.003	0.891**	1.001	0.891**
	(0.019)	(0.050)	(0.018)	(0.051)
Percent Black (log)	1.171**		1.165**	
× Laziness Stereotype	(0.080)		(0.084)	
Poverty Rate		1.024**		1.025***
× Racial Resentment		(0.011)		(0.010)
Individual-Level Variables				
Laziness Stereotype	0.884		0.897	
	(0.165)		(0.160)	
Racial Resentment		0.817		0.792
		(0.147)		(0.133)
Independent	2.202***	2.485***	2.145***	2.292**
	(0.593)	(0.827)	(0.565)	(0.744)
Republican	2.345***	1.943**	2.407***	1.869**
	(0.561)	(0.566)	(0.523)	(0.493)
Region Dummy Variables				
Middle Atlantic	0.461	0.771		
	(0.280)	(0.407)		
E. North Central	0.631	0.673		
	(0.363)	(0.331)		
W. North Central	0.767	2.095		
	(0.598)	(1.596)		
South Atlantic	0.590	0.560		
	(0.345)	(0.310)		
E. South Central	1.099	0.958		
	(0.799)	(0.662)		
W. South Central	1.147	0.791		
	(0.655)	(0.446)		
Mountain	0.554	0.923		
	(0.360)	(0.572)		
Pacific	0.567	0.897		
	(0.325)	(0.461)		
Constant	4.764	2.151	2.513	2.332
	(6.529)	(2.793)	(2.906)	(3.015)
Observations	512	361	512	361
MSAs	91	89	91	89
Log likelihood	-317.1	-217.4	-321.7	-220.0
States			33	32

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses
Party base category is Democrat; Region base category is New England
For concision, other control variables are not displayed
Results of logistic regression in Models 1 and 2
Results of multilevel logistic regression in Models 3 and 4
Source: 2000 General Social Survey. $^{*}\ p < 0.10$, $^{**}\ p < 0.05$, $^{***}\ p < 0.01$

Table B.3: Racialized Welfare Preferences across Counties

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Opposition to Welfare	Laziness Stereotype			Racial Resentment		
Racial Attitudes						
Laziness Stereotype	1.257***	0.961	1.043			
	(0.101)	(0.139)	(0.125)			
Racial Resentment				1.219***	0.977	1.652***
				(0.066)	(0.141)	(0.234)
Contextual Variables						
County Percent Black	1.005	0.503**		1.066	1.052	1.081
(log)	(0.084)	(0.150)		(0.112)	(0.112)	(0.111)
County Poverty Rate	1.028	1.024	1.026	1.024	0.906	
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.021)	(0.030)	(0.072)	
Laziness Stereotype		1.140**				
× County Percent Black (log)		(0.065)				
Racial Segregation			0.866**			
			(0.051)			
Laziness Stereotype			1.025**			
× Racial Segregation			(0.011)			
Racial Resentment					1.021	
× County Poverty Rate					(0.013)	
Income Segregation						1.339*
						(0.207)
Racial Resentment						0.943**
× Income Segregation						(0.022)
Control Variables						
Age	0.992	0.992	0.992	0.993	0.991	0.994
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Gender	1.283	1.299	1.287	1.249	1.212	1.161
	(0.248)	(0.252)	(0.245)	(0.291)	(0.284)	(0.274)
Marital Status	1.138	1.142	1.134	1.105	1.109	1.102
	(0.221)	(0.221)	(0.215)	(0.261)	(0.269)	(0.270)
Education (years)	0.930**	0.932**	0.930**	0.953	0.953	0.952
	(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.034)	(0.043)	(0.045)	(0.044)
Income	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Independent	2.158***	2.125***	2.116***	2.255***	2.146**	2.411***
	(0.559)	(0.559)	(0.553)	(0.688)	(0.644)	(0.743)
Republican	2.379***	2.335***	2.420***	1.821**	1.810**	1.907**
	(0.530)	(0.520)	(0.541)	(0.491)	(0.488)	(0.526)
Constant	0.324	1.298	0.940	0.234	0.985	0.0644**
	(0.270)	(1.287)	(0.875)	(0.209)	(1.215)	(0.084)
Observations	512	512	512	361	361	361
p	0.0000106	0.00000817	0.000000344	0.000639	0.000910	0.0000889
Log likelihood	-323.3	-321.0	-321.2	-223.5	-222.1	-220.2

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

Table reports odds ratios from logistic regression estimating probability of saying too much is spent on welfare

Source: 2000 General Social Survey; Party base category is Democrat

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

B.4, I report the results of linear regression analysis positing each of the racial attitude measures as the outcome variable. In neither case are these orientations significantly predicted by the Black population share of White respondents' surroundings, indicating that it is appropriate to include racial attitudes along with Black population share in the models reported in my results section.

Table B.4: Effect of Racial Context on Racial Attitudes: Part II

	(1) Laziness Stereotype	(2) Racial Resentment
Percent Black (log)	0.0149	0.0163
	(0.030)	(0.059)
Age	0.00920***	0.00777*
	(0.002)	(0.004)
Gender	-0.105	0.229
	(0.071)	(0.155)
Marital Status	-0.000599	0.406***
	(0.071)	(0.147)
Education (years)	-0.0419**	-0.148***
	(0.016)	(0.029)
Income (thousands)	0.000553	-0.00226
	(0.001)	(0.002)
Independent	-0.112	0.587***
	(0.081)	(0.183)
Republican	0.163**	1.150***
	(0.070)	(0.150)
Constant	5.589***	7.270***
	(0.274)	(0.502)
Observations	1535	1430
Adj. R-sq.	0.4482	0.6589

Standard errors in parentheses; Table reports results of OLS regression
Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey; Party base category is Democrat
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

B.2.2 Regional differences in affirmative action preferences

I now consider whether geographic patterns above the MSA level affect the policy preferences of Whites in Part II. Because the panel data analysis accounts for repeated measures from the

same individuals, adjusting standard errors appropriately, I do not also build multilevel models nesting individuals in states. Instead, I focus on adding regional dummy variables to identify any influence of living within a particular region. These results are reported in Table B.5 and show no significant effect of region. The base category is New England, and the model was created using binary logistic regression with random effects.

Table B.5: Controlling for Regional Characteristics: Part II

Opposition to AA (Binary)	(1) Region Dummy
Contextual Variables	
Percent Black (log)	0.902
	(0.263)
Black Med. Household	0.987
Income (thousands)	(0.018)
Individual-Level Variables	
Perceptions of BRS	1.610***
	(0.273)
Racial Resentment	1.725***
	(0.146)
Independent	1.183
	(0.687)
Republican	3.613***
	(1.705)
Region Dummy Variables	
Middle Atlantic	1.599
	(1.689)
E. North Central	0.541
	(0.553)
W. North Central	1.176
	(1.400)
South Atlantic	0.876
	(0.944)
E. South Central	0.695
	(0.907)
W. South Central	2.968
	(4.065)
Mountain	1.549
	(1.737)
Pacific	2.391
	(2.508)
Constant	1.591
	(3.220)
Observations	1279
Log likelihood	-368.5

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses
Table reports odds ratios from logistic regression (random effects)
For concision, additional control variables are not displayed
Source: 2006-2010 General Social Survey
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

C

Relative Status, Relative Influence: Replicating the Analysis of Part II

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C.4 Summary of Findings 310

In 2008, the ANES added a question to its post-election survey that had not been asked since 2000: how much influence would you say Blacks have in U.S. politics? The 2012 and 2016 surveys included a corresponding question about the influence of Whites. In this appendix, I analyze White opinion on these topics in the 2016 ANES as a means of replicating the analysis presented in Part II.

Perceptions of Blacks' political influence obviously differ from the evaluations I focused on in Part II, or perceptions of Blacks' economic status. A key distinction between the evaluations captured by the GSS and ANES is that the former asks whether a group *is* rich or poor, whereas the latter asks how much influence a group *should* have in politics. The question reads, "Some people think that certain groups have too much influence in American life and politics, while other people feel that certain groups don't have as much influence as they deserve," before going on to ask whether different racial groups have too much, too little, or the right amount. By explicitly referencing what different groups "deserve," the ANES question differs from the descriptive nature of the GSS rich/poor scale (even if descriptions of the world are colored by stereotypes).

While this difference must be kept in mind, it does not outweigh a more fundamental similarity between political influence and economic status: both reflect the power a racial group wields in society. An analysis of perceptions of Black influence therefore offers another way to conceptualize White understandings of the security of their powerful position. The ANES further offers the chance to connect perceptions of Black influence to Whites' views on affirmative action. Although the 2016 ANES asks about affirmative action only in education rather than employment, the core idea of distributing opportunities away from Whites and to Blacks still applies.

I begin by introducing my measure of Blacks' perceived influence. I next argue for its similarities to perceptions of BRS—particularly as both variables vary systematically across racial contexts. Finally, I demonstrate the significance of the influence variable in predicting views on affirmative action.

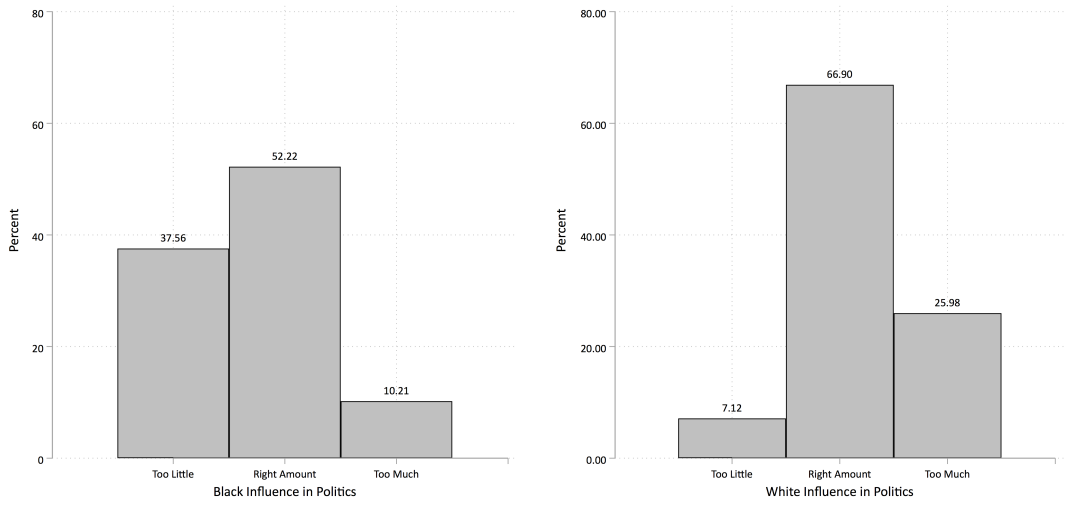
C.1 Introducing Perceptions of Blacks' Relative Influence

White responses to the ANES questions about political influence could be arranged along a scale similar to the rich/poor scale in the GSS, or a spectrum along which Blacks and Whites are placed according to each group's influence in national politics. Much like I conceptualized a perceived "status gap" between the races in Part II, we can think about a perceived "influence gap" between the races in this appendix. Whites who see a smaller influence gap between Whites and Blacks are those likely to feel that Whites' position is less secure.

The categorical form of the ANES question, however, leads me to take a different approach from Part II to operationalize a perceived gap. Respondents are given three options to evaluate Blacks' and Whites' influence (1= "too much," 2 = "the right amount," or 3 = "too little"). We cannot know what standard a respondent is using to determine what "the right amount" of influence a group should have in politics, although the question implies a norm of proportionate influence for groups (in keeping with the principle of one person, one vote). Regardless, what matters for the present analysis is a respondent's *relative* placement of Blacks and Whites. Whatever

influence someone thinks each race deserves, we can still determine whether they believe the balance of power is wrongly tilted in one direction.

Figure C.1: Visualizing White Perceptions of Racial Groups' Influence in Politics



Source: 2016 ANES Time Series Study (n = 2,587). Figure shows the distribution of opinion among Whites in the 2016 ANES sample, regarding the influence of Blacks and Whites in national politics.

Figure C.1 shows a clear trend of Whites being more likely to think that their own group has too much influence in politics, and that Blacks have too little. This outcome maps onto the pattern in the GSS of Whites thinking that Blacks are poorer than Whites on the whole, indicating that these two variables reflect an awareness of true racial disparities.

To gauge how a given White individual evaluates the racial groups in relation to one another, I construct a categorical variable reflecting whether the respondent sees Blacks as relatively disempowered, equal to Whites in influence, or relatively influential:

1. Relatively Low Black Influence: Black Influence – White Influence = (–). The strongest version of this scenario occurs when a White respondent believes Whites have too much influence and Blacks have too little (1a). The balance of political influence is also seen to be tilted in Whites' favor, though less strongly so, when a White respondent believes that Whites have too much and Blacks have the right amount of influence, or believes that Whites have the right amount and Blacks have too little (1b).

2. Equal Influence: Black Influence – White Influence = 0. Blacks and Whites both have "too much," both have "too little," or both have "the right amount" of influence from the perspective of a White respondent. In any case, the groups are evaluated equal in influence, indicating that there is no power imbalance between Whites and Blacks.

3. Relatively High Black Influence: Black Influence – White Influence = (+). Again, there are two scenarios. Whites who see Blacks as slightly more influential believe that Blacks have too much influence and Whites have the right amount, or that Blacks have the right amount and Whites have too little (3a). Whites who see Blacks as much more influential believe that Blacks have too much power and Whites have too little (3b).

The distribution of Whites among these categories in the data is summarized in Table C.1. We might think of the higher categories as indicating Whites who perceive a smaller influence gap (or even an inverted one) between Blacks and Whites.

Table C.1: Views of the "Balance of Power" between Blacks and Whites

	Perceived relative influence of races	White respondents in category
1a	Whites much greater influence	22%
1b	Whites greater influence	16%
2	Equal influence	51%
3a	Blacks greater influence	7%
3b	Blacks much greater influence	4%

Source: 2016 ANES (n = 2,581); Table summarizes White evaluations of Blacks' influence in U.S. politics, relative to the influence of Whites.

If perceptions of Blacks' political influence and BRS reflect the same core concern over the security of Whites' position, then my analysis of the ANES should offer support for two further conjectures. First, Whites should be more likely to see Blacks as relatively influential in proximity to a larger Black population. Second, Whites who believe Blacks are relatively influential should be more opposed to affirmative action, all else equal. I offer evidence for these conjectures in the next two sections.

C.2 Contextual Predictors of the Perceived Balance of Power

In Part II, I showed that Whites were likely to see a smaller status gap between the races in MSAs with larger shares of Black residents or higher unemployment rates. To replicate my analysis in relation to perceptions of political influence rather than economic status, I focus on racial context. I expect that locations where race is more salient are those where Whites will think Blacks have greater influence in politics, all else equal.

Because group size is one factor that can lead to greater political influence, Whites in proximity to a larger Black presence will likely believe that Blacks are more influential. However, there is also an element of subjectivity here. For one, there are limits to the translation of minority group size into political power. Consider recent work on the relationship between Black population presence and lenient voter registration laws, which have historically been characterized as a means to amplify the voice of a minority group and counteract the workings of the conventional threat hypothesis. Tetsuya Matsubayashi and Renee Rocha argue that lenient voter registration rules tend to amplify the voices of groups that are already more advantaged, thus exacerbating rather than counteracting the threat response of White voters in high-density Black settings. Moreover, it tends to be states with smaller minority populations that enact more lenient voting rules in the first place.[1] Findings like these reveal that the link between group size and group influence is by no means clear cut.

Moreover, the ANES asks about racial groups' "influence in U.S. politics," a phrasing that emphasizes the power a group exerts at the national level. In keeping with the principle that we draw on our proximate surroundings to form opinions about national-level issues, it is not surprising for Whites to judge Blacks' *national* influence in part based on the *local* presence of Blacks. All the same, such behavior shows that White evaluations of Black influence are shaped by a mix of objective and subjective considerations.

I do not consider economic dimensions of threat in the present analysis. Further research is merited to explore how economic context might be relevant to perceptions of Black influence, and to situate that conversation in regard to attitudes on affirmative action in higher education. I do, however, follow my procedure in Part II of controlling for the Black laziness stereotype when predicting perceptions of Black influence. A White person who thinks Blacks are lazy may think

1. Matsubayashi and Rocha, "Racial Diversity and Public Policy in the States."

that any influence Blacks exert is too much, or that by requiring public resources (e.g. stereotyping Blacks as welfare recipients) Blacks command excessive influence in politics.

Contextual data are drawn from the 2015 ACS 5-year estimates for both congressional districts and states. As discussed in Part I, Section 3.4, congressional districts are the most granular geographies available in the ANES public data. They are useful in offering detail below the state level, although they are variable in size. I repeat the analysis with state data because someone in a low-density Black congressional district but high-density Black state would still be exposed to state-level racial politics in local media coverage—which may influence perceptions of Black influence at the national level (as specified by the ANES question). Moreover, the racial gerrymandering of districts means that, more so than MSA boundaries, congressional district lines may be artificial reflections of the salience of race in a given geographic container.

Table C.2 reports ordered logit models incorporating measures of the Black population share in each respondent's congressional district (Model 1) and state (Model 2), and estimating these variables' effects on a respondent's perception of the relative influence of Blacks (1 = low Black influence, 2 = equal influence, 3 = high Black influence). Standard errors are clustered by district or state, as appropriate. The results identify greater perceptions of Black influence in settings with a greater Black presence, although the relationship is strongest at the state level. This finding likely reflects aforementioned dynamics related to the way congressional districts are often drawn with respect to race, as well as the relevance of a state's racial politics to White evaluations of Black influence at the national level.

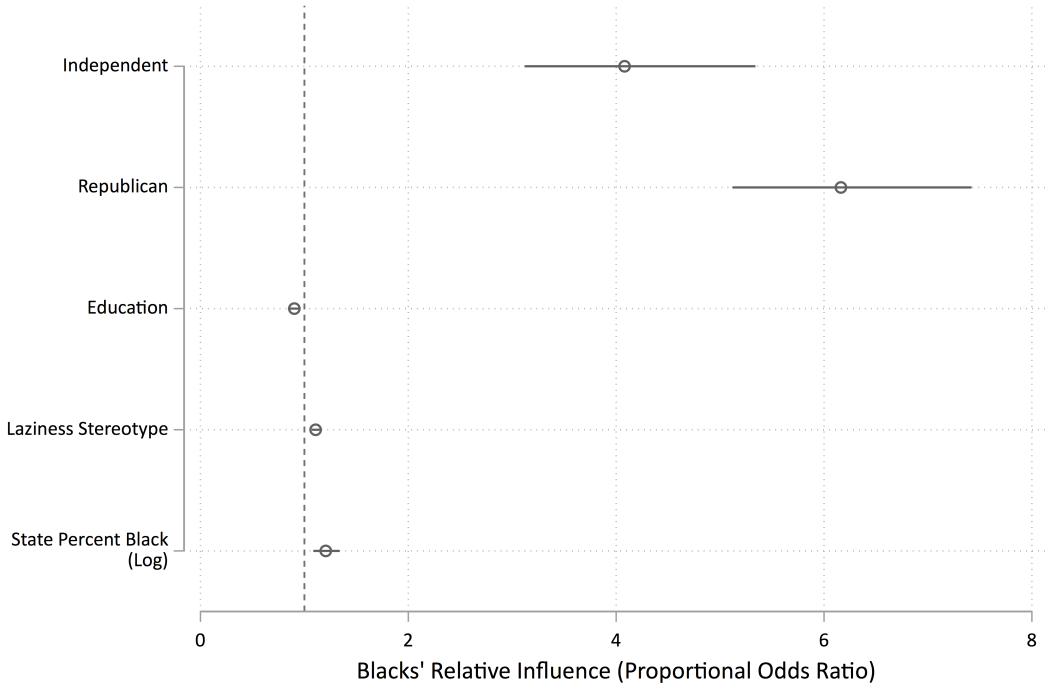
Figure C.2 visualizes these different effects as estimated by Model 2 in Table C.2. The figure highlights that the effect of Black population share is significant, though small. Partisanship is a much stronger predictor of evaluations of Black influence. The figure also highlights the opposite effect of education, which is associated with lower evaluations of Black influence. This finding matches the effect of education on perceptions of BRS in Part II, suggesting that education brings awareness of true racial disparities, whether in terms of political power or economic capital.

Table C.2: Percent Black and Perceptions of Black Influence

Perceptions of Blacks' Relative Influence	(1) Congressional District	(2) State
District Percent Black (Log)	1.083*	
	(0.046)	
State Percent Black (Log)		1.206***
		(0.064)
Laziness Stereotype	1.112***	1.108***
	(0.021)	(0.019)
Independent	4.087***	4.081***
	(0.591)	(0.560)
Republican	6.175***	6.163***
	(0.653)	(0.584)
Age	1.011***	1.010***
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Gender	1.121	1.120
	(0.093)	(0.098)
Marital Status	0.986	0.984
	(0.084)	(0.094)
Education	0.903***	0.903***
	(0.020)	(0.023)
Income	0.992	0.993
	(0.007)	(0.008)
Cut 1	1.535	1.964**
	(0.494)	(0.668)
Cut 2	34.26***	44.27***
	(11.253)	(15.202)
Observations	2437	2437
p	2.83e-84	2.85e-121
Log likelihood	-2009.6	-2004.5

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses
Table reports results of ordered logistic regression
Source: 2016 ANES Time Series Study. Party base category is Democrat
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure C.2: Predictors of Perceptions of Black Influence



Source: 2016 ANES Time Series Study (n = 2,437). Figure visualizes predictors of White respondents' evaluation of Blacks' influence in U.S. politics, relative to Whites'. Party base category is Democrat.

C.3 Perceptions of Black Influence and Opposition to Affirmative Action

My final step is to identify a relationship between perceiving Blacks as relatively influential in politics and opposing affirmative action. In contrast to the GSS focus on hiring practices, the ANES in 2016 asks about affirmative action in education, using the following question:

> Do you favor, oppose, or neither favor nor oppose allowing universities to increase the number of black students studying at their schools by considering race along with other factors when choosing students?

I recode the 1-7 scale capturing responses to this question into a binary variable (1 = oppose, 0 = neutral or support). I then use binary logistic regression to produce the models reported in Table C.3. The relative influence categories reflect those detailed in Table C.1, using five categories to examine variation depending on how strongly the balance of power is perceived to be tilted either toward or away from Blacks.

As a proxy for racial resentment, I again use the question asking whether Blacks should "work their way up" without "special favors," as discussed in my replication of my Part I analysis on the 2000 ANES (see Section 3.4).

The results reported in Table C.3 show that believing Blacks relatively influential predicts a greater likelihood of opposing affirmative action, all else equal. Figure C.3 further visualizes the relationship between influence perceptions and affirmative action. The relationship is essentially similar to the one I identified in Part II, between perceiving Blacks to be relatively "rich" and opposing affirmative action.

The sharpest increase in the probability of opposing affirmative action occurs between those Whites who believe the balance of power is strongly shifted in their favor, and those who believe it is only slightly so. Keeping in mind that a majority of the sample thinks that Blacks and Whites have equal political influence, the most notable finding of my analysis is the distinction between (a) White respondents who recognize White privilege *and* Black disadvantage (seeing the balance of power strongly tilted toward Whites); and (b) Whites who only recognize Black disadvantage (seeing the balance of power slightly tilted toward Whites), or who believe Whites and Blacks have equal influence. These groups fall into the categories depicted in Figure C.3 of "Whites much more," "Whites more," and "Equal influence," respectively.

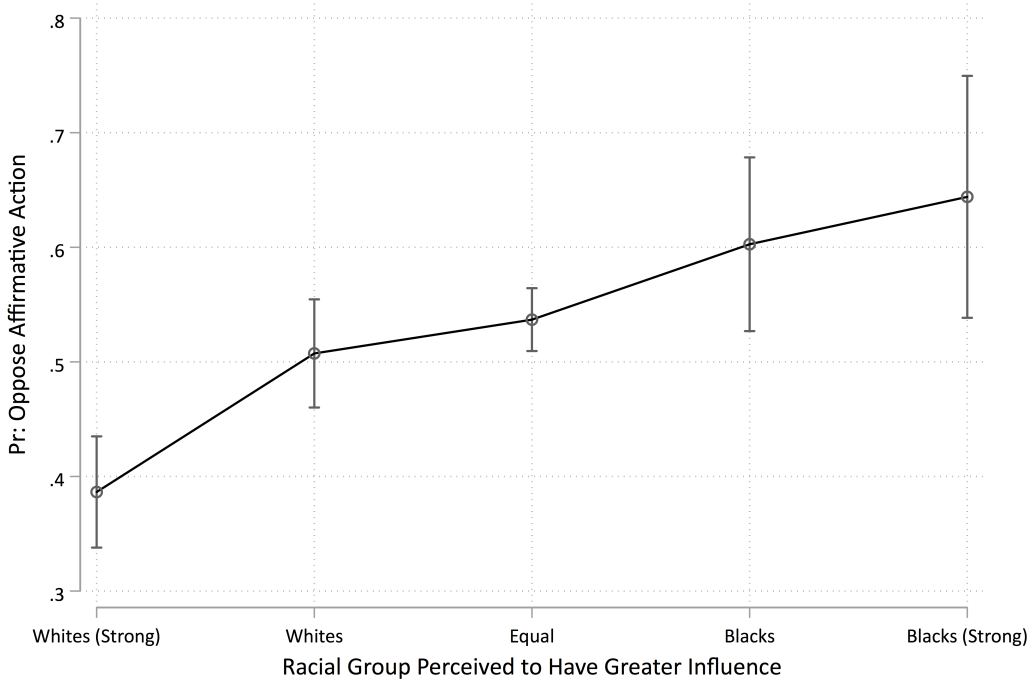
The insight of Figure C.3 is that one indicator of whether Whites will oppose affirmative action in higher education is whether they believe Whites have considerably more political influence than Blacks, thus recognizing both Black disadvantage and White advantage. When holding other variables at their means, there is a 14 percentage-point difference between a Democrat and Republican in the likelihood of opposing affirmative action. There is nearly as large a difference—12 percentage points—between a respondent who sees Whites as much more influential in national politics than Blacks, and one who sees Whites as only slightly more influential.

Table C.3: Perceptions of Black Influence and Opposition to Affirmative Action

	(1)
Opposition to AA (binary)	
Relative Influence Variables	
Whites more	1.728***
	(0.262)
Equal influence	1.973***
	(0.266)
Blacks more	2.664***
	(0.582)
Blacks much more	3.243***
	(0.938)
Control Variables	
Racial Resentment	1.166***
	(0.020)
Independent	1.257
	(0.188)
Republican	1.907***
	(0.205)
Age	0.995**
	(0.002)
Gender	1.136
	(0.102)
Marital Status	1.050
	(0.103)
Education	1.076***
	(0.024)
Income	1.011*
	(0.007)
Constant	0.0679***
	(0.022)
Observations	2435
p	1.93e-80
Log likelihood	-1482.0

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses
Table reports odds ratios from logistic regression of probability of opposing affirmative action
Source: 2016 ANES Time Series Study. Party base category is Democrat
Relative influence base category is Whites much more
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure C.3: Opposition to Affirmative Action as Perceptions of Black Influence Increase



Source: 2016 ANES Time Series Study (n = 2,435). Figure visualizes relationship between White perceptions of Black influence (coded as a categorical variable) and the probability of opposition to affirmative action.

C.4 Summary of Findings

This appendix has shown that White perceptions of Blacks' influence in national politics operate according to a similar logic as White perceptions of BRS. Both evaluations tend to be higher in the presence of a larger Black population, all else equal; and both evaluations predict greater opposition to affirmative action as the gap between Blacks and Whites is perceived to narrow.

In Part II, my argument that seeing Blacks as "richer" predicts greater opposition to affirmative action challenged the conventional wisdom that improvements in Blacks' economic standing would make Whites view Blacks more favorably. In this appendix, it may be less surprising that seeing Blacks as more influential exacerbates opposition to policies aimed to increase the representation of Blacks in higher education, given that education is one way of putting more Blacks in positions of influence. Yet, the findings of this appendix nonetheless offer support for my analysis in Part II. Both analyses demonstrate the operation of a status threat posed by Black improvement, as opposed

to the typical conceptualization of a threat associated with the stigmas of Black poverty, and/or with little specification of the economic characteristics of a supposedly threatening Black population.

D

Black on White: Positionality and the Study of Racial Attitudes

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Part III briefly discussed the implications of my identity as a Black American female for a thesis on White Americans' racial attitudes and policy preferences. I am cautious about overstating the need to explain or justify one's research focus—something rarely expected of the White, heteronormative, male academic, for example.

The subject nonetheless merits further attention, particularly in regard to the qualitative interview data presented in Part III. In this appendix, I address potential concerns that White respondents would not reveal the "truth" to me as a non-White researcher. I then suggest reframing my positionality as a Black, female researcher from an inconvenient drawback to a fresh perspective in the study of White attitudes.

D.1 Race Matching in Qualitative Interviews

The question of positionality is germane to Part III irrespective of my identity: an interpretive study explicitly conceptualizes knowledge as produced through the interaction of researcher and participants. It is unconventional, however, for Black researchers to conduct interviews with White respondents (and less conventional than the study of White public opinion by Black researchers—my approach in Parts I and II).

There is, of course, an underrepresentation of Black researchers in general. Race may also influence one's access to or knowledge of research subjects, or raise concerns about a researcher's safety or wellbeing that would complicate the idea of interviewing Whites. But, another reason few Black researchers work with White research participants is that many choose to turn a lens on Blacks rather than Whites, challenging the long tradition of studying race through a White lens.[1] In doing so, Black researchers are addressing a foundational concern of literature on "race-of-interviewer" effects.

Research into the effects of an interviewer's race descends from the concerns of mid-20th century researchers that Blacks felt less comfortable speaking to White survey researchers.[2] In the 1990s, qualitative interviewers—particularly White feminists—also began to contemplate how the racially dominant position of Whites would limit their ability to interact with and understand the experiences of Black interviewees.[3] The standard strategy to minimize such race-of-interviewer effects has been to match interviewers and respondents by race (and/or gender)—a particularly valuable approach when working with marginalized groups.[4]

As much as these efforts have been promoted as a way to challenge assumptions of White neutrality and objectivity in conducting research, it is striking that the "problem" of race-of-

1. Tukufu Zuberi and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008).

2. Herbert Hyman's 1942 study of Blacks in Memphis, TN found drastic underreporting of even minor details, such as education or car ownership, when an interviewer was White. See Herbert H. Hyman et al., *Interviewing in Social Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), as well as Howard Schuman and Jean M. Converse, "The Effects of Black and White Interviewers on Black Responses in 1968," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (1971): 44–68.

3. For a review, see Eileen O'Brien, "The Transformation of the Role of"Race" in the Qualitative Interview: Not If Race Matters, But How?," chap. 5 in *Rethinking Race and Ethnicity in Research Methods*, ed. John H. Stanfield II (London and New York: Routledge, 2016).

4. April L. Few, Dionne P. Stephens, and Marlo Rouse-Arnett, "Sister-to-Sister Talk: Transcending Boundaries and Challenges in Qualitative Research With Black Women," *Family Relations* 52, no. 3 (2003): 205–215.

interviewer effects is unquestionably framed as one that arises when Whites study Blacks. This leaves the norm that White interviewers should interview White respondents typically unchallenged.

There are some exceptions to this, the majority coming from non-White authors. Black feminist sociologist France Widdance Twine, for example, offers a critical discussion of the various reasons race matching does not necessarily produce "better" data, especially given the other identities that intersect with race.[5] Twine also points to the critiques of Ann Phoenix and Penny Rhodes—both British researchers, the former Black and the latter White—that advocating for race-matching risks marginalizing Black researchers to study only Black subjects, and making invisible the contributions of Black researchers on any other topics.[6]

It is also worth referencing Charles Gallagher, a White sociologist who has commented on the possibility that White researchers may seem to endorse racism among White interviewees, and pointed out the other elements of his identity that make him nonetheless an outsider to the Whites he studies.[7] While Gallagher valuably challenges the depiction of White-on-White interview settings as "pure," he does more to advocate for reflectiveness among White researchers than to support the legitimacy of non-White researchers speaking to White subjects.

Therefore, while there exists some precedent for conversation about the integrity of data gleaned from White subjects by a Black researcher, my approach merits further discussion. I do not suggest that the race of an interviewer is irrelevant; nor do I deny that there are instances in which it may be inadvisable for a Black researcher to conduct interviews with White subjects. Rather, I offer four comments that engage with the specific circumstances of my project and argue for the value of its findings.

D.2 The Perspective of a Black (Female) Researcher

When seeking out feedback during the planning stages of my research, a distinguished White political scientist told me I should "make a bug a feature." Putting aside the assumptions laden

5. France Winddance Twine, "Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies," in *Racing Research, Researching Race: Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Race Studies*, ed. France Winddance Twine and Jonathan Warren (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 6-14.

6. Ibid., 12-14.

7. Gallagher, "'The End of Racism' as the New Doxa: New Strategies for Researching Race."

in identifying my race as a "bug" to begin with, this statement demonstrates the conventional wisdom that Whites should interview Whites. It also suggests a way to unpack the significance of my race in the interview setting: beginning by addressing two of the most common reasons one might see my race as a "bug" in a study of White attitudes, then addressing two "features" that, I argue, my positionality brings to this project.

D.2.1 "Whites won't be willing to talk to you about race"

The most common response I received upon describing my thesis in academic settings was that Whites would not be willing to talk to me about anything related to race. This is an understandable concern—but I argue now, as I did then, that this concern is easily expressed without paying attention to the details of my project or the biases of one's own perspective.

First, the goal of my interviews was not to ascertain White respondents' racial attitudes, or to have sustained conversation about their feelings toward Blacks. Rather, I was exploring White Baton Rougeans' positions on policy issues that have implications for race. In line with the larger goal of the thesis to understand how the color line is maintained in practice, or how ideas about race *operate*, the discussions I had during my qualitative fieldwork were primarily about issues that could be discussed without reference to race. Granted, the racial dimensions of these issues, along with my presence (as discussed below), brought race into the conversations. But, my targeted questions about much-publicized issues such as St. George and EBR public schools were by no means traversing taboo issues. The violence of early July was a more sensitive topic—but respondents themselves almost always brought up the shootings, as they processed what had happened or defended Baton Rouge as a calm, friendly place. In other words, far from asking uncomfortable questions about race or inequality, my interviews covered standard topics of conversation given the time and place. All of this is not to say that it would be impossible for a Black researcher to interview Whites about more sensitive topics related to race, but it is important to be explicit about the nature of my interviews.

Second, I was primarily warned about White reticence by scholars who appeared to have little familiarity with the South. Here I return to two points raised in Chapter 6: that my identity as someone with roots in Louisiana justified my presence there; and that Southern Whites are

known for their ability to comfortably co-exist in close physical proximity to Blacks (using other strategies to maintain social and emotional distance).[8] In other words, I expected and indeed found that the Whites I spoke with were generally warm, welcoming, and happy to discuss the issues I raised. Even Randy, who in the opening of Chapter 7 expressed suspicion toward me, was remarkably open once we sat down.

Randy is an excellent example, in fact, of someone who has supported initiatives that stand to disproportionately harm Blacks in Baton Rouge, who endorses a number of racial stereotypes, and who ignores the power differential between Blacks and Whites—but who is the opposite of an insulated White person with little exposure to racial diversity. Randy's comfort in the interracial meeting in which we first met was obvious; he also was enthusiastic in explaining to me the various ways that race was falsely implicated as an explanatory factor in Baton Rouge. Other dynamics were certainly at play here, which I discuss below—including the power dynamics stemming from my age and gender, as well as the salience of my race in the interview setting. But my respondents undeniably revealed the comfort that I expected from Whites who live in a parish that is almost half Black.

D.2.2 "Whites will only say what they think you want to hear"

Related to the concern that Whites would not speak to a Black interviewer was the concern that any comments shared with me would be biased due to respondents' fears of seeming "racist." There may have been some social desirability bias at play among my interviewees, leading them to take more care in their wording than they would have with a White interviewer. There were times when my respondents caught themselves having "slipped" (e.g. Elise noticing when she referenced a "White restaurant," in Section 7.4). There were other instances in which respondents worked hard to convince me that they liked Black people, had Black friends, were not scared to go to NBR, and the like. These tendencies may reflect Kinder and Sanders's previous findings that Whites are more likely to express liberal views on racial issues when speaking to Black

8. Ritterhouse, *Growing up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race*.

as opposed to White interviewers.[9]

However, it is unlikely that pressure to appear racially tolerant or progressive was so enhanced by my race that it distorted my findings. For one, norms around discussing racial issues have evolved in the two decades since Kinder and Sanders wrote, changing what might be considered acceptable to say even to a White interviewer. Research into racial politics need not rely on White respondents confessing their deepest and darkest feelings about race in the first place—but, assuming such feelings exist, even a White researcher may have to navigate a "rhetorical maze of color blindness" to get to any confessions.[10]

More fundamentally, a core premise of interpretive methodology is that researcher influence not only is inevitable, but also is a valuable part of the research process. As Erving Goffman famously argued, we all perform "frontstage" identities that are distinct from our "backstage" ones, but neither identity is inherently more "real."[11] Appreciating that I collected the reflections that respondents *chose* to share with a Black interviewer should frame my discussion, not invalidate it—particularly given my analytical focus on the discursive strategies respondents used to explain their positions to me. We should question why, much like Whiteness is often assumed to be neutral or immutable, it is assumed that Whites do not also perform to White interviewers.[12] Ultimately, if knowledge in the interview setting is always produced intersubjectively, then any version of truth produced should be appreciated as one of many valid performances an interview subject could give.

D.2.3 Raising the salience of race

I now turn to two of the benefits of my racial identity in conducting this research. To begin, consider the interpretivist argument that the presence of a researcher who violates the norms of a

9. See chapter 2 of Kinder and Sanders, *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*. On social desirability and Whites' tendency to overstate their support for Black candidates when polled—particularly if the researcher is Black—see Steven E. Finkel, Thomas M. Guterbock, and Marian J. Borg, "Race-of-Interviewer Effects in a Preelection Poll: Virginia 1989," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (1991): 313–330. This tendency has been called the "Wilder effect," due to its origins in 1989 gubernatorial election in Virginia, when Black candidate Douglas Wilder won the race by a considerably smaller vote share than predicted. However, for an argument that the Wilder effect is a product of specific political contexts rather than a general principle, see Daniel J. Hopkins, "No More Wilder Effect, Never a Whitman Effect: When and Why Polls Mislead about Black and Female Candidates," *Journal of Politics* 71, no. 03 (July 2009): 769.

10. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*.

11. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Harmondsworth, 1978).

12. Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*.

situation can be a valuable feature, bringing to the surface dynamics that may not otherwise reveal themselves.[13] In one of few examples I could locate of a Black researcher in conversation with Whites, Kirby Moss explains that he "strategically [cast himself] as a social actor" in the field, recognizing that his presence would racialize his conversations with low-income Whites but being open about this and contextualizing his observations accordingly.[14] I would not categorize my entry into the field as similarly "strategic," but my presence almost certainly made my respondents more likely to bring up issues of race, which I would refrain from mentioning until respondents did first.

Respondents' awareness of my race was clear in the efforts many made to demonstrate that they were not racist or to reject racial stereotypes. It was also evident when they would make illogical or non sequitur references to race (e.g. bringing up race when the conversation was quite far from the topic), or use phrases such as "people like you" to make reference to middle-income Blacks. My presence, therefore, brought race into the room, which is undoubtedly reflected in the data I collected. But, race is no less "in the room" when a White researcher speaks to a White respondent. Moreover, in a setting like Baton Rouge—where race was already a prominent feature of life and the issues we were discussing, and in light of the particular salience of race in the summer of 2016—my subtle racialization of the interviews arguably served as an illuminative rather than "contaminating" addition to the research settings.

D.2.4 Being an "outsider within"

Fourth and finally, my identity as a Black female researcher recalls Black feminist scholarship on the status of Black women in academia. Patricia Hill Collins has called this position that of the "outsider within," based on the tension between the Black female experience and the "White male insiderism" of the academy.[15] Collins uses the concept of the outsider within to understand the social locations of individuals "caught between groups of unequal power," as well as to argue

13. Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, *Interpretative Research Design*.

14. Kirby Moss, *The Color of Class* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003). Note that as a Black, middle-income researcher, Moss served as a direct contrast not only to his research subjects but also to the very issue he sought to study: lower-income Whites' conceptions of Whiteness. This is different from my policy-oriented conversations: while my presence made race salient, and was brought into conversation at points, I was not directly asking respondents to reflect on my own identity in comparison to theirs.

15. Patricia Hill Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within," *Social Problems: Special Theory Issue* 33, no. 6 (1986): S14–S32.

for the insights to be gained from Black women's perspectives.[16] This argument, one that has significantly informed standpoint theory, endorses the value to be gained from supplementing academic concepts with one's lived experiences of systems of power.

Considering my particular "outsider within" status in Baton Rouge offers another way to think about my role as an interviewer. On the one hand, I possessed the requisite cultural competence to interact with Southerners as a Southerner myself, even if not a White resident of Baton Rouge. My speech, presentation, and background present as "White" to many audiences, which almost certainly improved my reception by the Whites I encountered. Furthermore, I occupied a position of authority in the interview setting as a researcher coming from an elite university (although my affiliation with Oxford was not of particular interest, and occasionally was viewed with confusion or suspicion).

On the other hand, I am a member of the subordinate sex, the subordinate race, and an age group subordinate to that of most of my interviewees. These nondominant group identities arguably complemented my similarities to the White subjects to produce my status as an outsider within. My age and gender in particular shaped the power dynamic in the interview setting: while this could be challenging to navigate, it was beneficial that I did not have a persona that respondents would have been inclined to see as threatening or accusatory. To use sociologist Georg Simmel's term, my positionality offered some of the capacities of the "stranger"—someone whose claim to objectivity comes from "a peculiar composition of nearness and remoteness, concern and indifference;" who often elicits comments that someone might not confide in one of their peers; and who has the ability to see patterns it would be harder to identify if immersed in the situation.[17]

It is possible that my White and/or male equivalent—a young researcher with roots in Baton Rouge but having left to study at Oxford—could have played a different sort of stranger had he conducted the research presented in Part III. There are multiple ways to strike a balance between proximity and distance. Yet, it is also possible that my hypothetical counterparts would have encountered challenges that I did not. Would my Black male counterpart have suffered from stereotypes of Black men as aggressive or dangerous? Would my White female counterpart have had to ask more directly about race, rather than waiting for respondents to bring it up?

16. Patricia Hill Collins, "Reflections on the Outsider Within," *Journal of Career Development* 26, no. 1 (1999): 85.

17. Quoted in Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within," S15. Collins cites Black women's particular legacy of playing the "stranger" as domestic workers within White households and then argues that Black females play a similar role in the academy, a space long dominated by and centered on the White male.

There are obvious problematic issues underlying these rhetorical questions, which reference racial stereotypes and gender norms that shape many social interactions. But my point is that the influence of a researcher's identity is inevitable, and the influence of mine, in this case, brought advantages as well as disadvantages. With additional resources of time and funding it could have been possible to hire a research assistant; to more systematically conduct a portion of interviews by phone for comparison; or to have otherwise investigated the potential influence of my race.[18] I maintain, however, that the research as it stands on its own should be considered no more biased, certainly no less "true," and potentially more interesting than had the project been conducted entirely by a White researcher.

To pose one last rhetorical question: would my White male counterpart have considered in the first place an argument based on the premise that those at the top of a system of structural violence do not have to engage with what life is like for those at the bottom? As Collins argues, the potential creativity of the marginal space occupied by Black women in the academy is realized when "experienced reality is used as a valid source of knowledge for critical sociological facts and theories, while sociological thought offers new ways of seeing that experienced reality."[19] Although I cannot claim to have mastered this sort of creativity, Collins offers a goal to aspire to—and inspires confidence in the value of bringing underrepresented and often disregarded perspectives to light.

18. I conducted three interviews by phone, when an in-person meeting was not possible. In at least two of these three interviews, the respondent nonetheless was aware that I was Black.

19. Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within," S29-S30.

E

Supplementary Materials for Part III

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This appendix offers additional information about the respondents who informed my analysis in Part III, as well as the materials that they were provided and questions they were asked in the interview setting.

E.1 Attributes of Interview Participants

Table E.1 offers an overview of the 48 residents of the Baton Rouge area who participated in interviews in July and August 2016. The "cipher" column includes the pseudonyms I use to refer to the respondents whose remarks feature most prominently in Chapter 7. Note that most respondents without ciphers are also cited at some point throughout the reporting of my results, although they are not given names to avoid introducing more characters to the story than necessary.

Table E.1: Interviewee Attributes

Interviewee	Cipher	Gender	Race	Age Group	Party ID	Respondent category
1		M	White	40-49	Independent	St. George opponent
2	Larry	M	White	50-59	Democrat	Observer
3		M	White	60-69	Independent	Observer
4	Greg	M	White	40-49	Democrat	Observer
5	Isabel	F	White	20-29	Independent	Observer
6		M	White	20-29	Democrat	Observer
7	Nancy	F	White	60-69	N/A	School affiliate
8		M	Black	70+	Independent	Black respondent
9		F	White	60-69	Democrat	Observer
10		M	White	30-39	N/A	Observer
11	Kenneth	M	White	60-69	Republican	St. George supporter
12		F	White	30-39	Democrat	Observer
13		F	White	50-59	Republican	School affiliate
14		F	White	50-59	Democrat	St. George opponent
15		F	Black	60-69	Democrat	Black respondent
16	Joanne	F	White	60-69	Republican	School affiliate
17	Kathy	F	White	60-69	Democrat	Observer
18		F	White	50-59	Republican	School affiliate
19	Randy	M	White	60-69	Republican	St. George supporter
20		F	Black	60-69	Democrat	Black respondent
21		M	Black	60-69	Democrat	Black respondent
22	Brian	M	White	50-59	Republican	Observer
23		M	White	30-39	Republican	Observer
24		F	White	50-59	Independent	Observer
25		M	White	60-69	Republican	St. George supporter
26	James	M	White	60-69	Independent	St. George opponent
27		F	Black	60-69	Democrat	Black respondent
28		M	White	50-59	Republican	School affiliate
29		F	Black	40-49	Democrat	Black Respondent
30	Elise	F	White	50-59	Republican	St. George supporter
31		F	Mixed[†]	40-49	Democrat	Black respondent
32		M	Black	70+	Democrat	Black respondent
33	Wayne	M	White	30-39	Republican	St. George supporter
34		M	White	60-69	Democrat	Observer
35		M	White[‡]	50-59	Democrat	Black respondent
36	Deborah	F	White	50-59	Democrat	St. George opponent
37		M	White	30-39	Republican	St. George opponent
38		M	Black	40-49	Democrat	Black respondent
39		M	Black	40-49	Democrat	Black respondent
40	Mark	M	White	20-29	Republican	Observer
41		F	White	40-49	Democrat	St. George opponent
42		M	Black	70+	Democrat	Black respondent
43		M	White	60-69	Republican	St. George supporter
44	Chad	M	White	30-39	Republican	St. George supporter
45		M	White	70+	N/A	St. George opponent
46		M	Black	60-69	Democrat	Black respondent
47		M	White	50-59	N/A	St. George supporter
48		M	White	40-49	Independent	St. George opponent

[†]Mixed-race respondent who identified as Black.

[‡]Arab-American respondent who, when in Baton Rouge, identified as White.

E.2 Interview Information Sheet

On the next page, I reproduce the information sheet that each interview subject received at the start of the interview, used to gain his or her oral consent to participate.

Nina M. Yancy | University of Oxford
Department of Politics & International Relations
+1 214 226 5531 (US) | +44 7572 503 244 (UK)
nina.yancy@univ.ox.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet

1. What is this study about?

This study aims to explore what residents of the Baton Rouge area think about their local community. It is conducted by Nina Yancy, a doctoral student in political science at the University of Oxford, working under the supervision of Professor Desmond King and Professor Ben Ansell.

2. What will happen in the interview?

The interview will last between 30 minutes and one hour and aims to offer you a chance to share your insights on matters of importance in your community. No risks are anticipated to follow from taking part in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time or skip any question you like.

3. What will happen to the data I provide?

Your insights on life in Baton Rouge will inform the researcher's dissertation. The completed thesis will be deposited in the University of Oxford's archives, which are available online with open access to Internet users. Your identity will be kept completely confidential throughout the process: you'll be referred to only via a numerical code or pen name, and any audio records of your interview will be destroyed when the research is completed.

4. What if I have questions or concerns?

The University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee has reviewed this project and granted it approval. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the researcher (214-226-5531) or her supervisor Desmond King (+44 1865278578). If you remain unhappy, you can contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford at ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk and use CUREC ethics reference SSH_DPIR_C1A_16_021.

E.3 Interview Guide

This section presents the interview guide used for semi-structured interviews conducted with residents of the Baton Rouge area in July and August 2016.

Research introduction

Objective: To introduce the project, address confidentiality of interview data, and establish rapport.

- Introduce researcher, degree program at Oxford, connection to Baton Rouge, and research interest in urban politics, public policy, and public opinion among residents of American cities
- Share participant information sheet and researcher's contact details; explain how the interview will proceed and remind respondent of confidentiality of all interview data; address any questions or concerns
- Ask permission to record the interview

About the geography of Baton Rouge

Objective: To ask the respondent to reflect on the geography of the Baton Rouge area. This establishes a reference point for the rest of the interview by situating the respondents in the local context and introducing the perspective of the respondent. Collectively, these responses reveal patterns in residents' conceptions of their local geography and issues that are connected to particular places.

- What are the different neighborhoods of Baton Rouge?
- What are some of the characteristics of each of those areas?
  - (Prompts, if needed:) Does anything else come to mind? What kinds of places would you find in that area: residences, commercial establishments, any other amenities? Do you know what most of the people who live in that area do for a living? Do you ever go to that area?
  - Terms to ask respondents to define if they arise include "middle class," "nice," "dangerous"
- Where do you currently live?
- If you had to move elsewhere in the parish, where would you move?

The St. George incorporation effort

Objective: To ascertain the respondent's knowledge of and position on the St. George initiative. In no case were respondents entirely ignorant of the incorporation effort, but the length of this section varied greatly according to a respondent's familiarity. For those proximate to the movement or its opposition, this section of the interviews offered insight on how the movement developed. For all respondents, this section offered insight on how the movement was perceived.

- What do you know or have you heard about the movement to incorporate a city of St. George?
- What was the motivation behind the effort? What were the goals of the movement?
- Let's imagine St. George incorporated as of 2017. What would it look like?
- What would have been different about that area five years later?
- What would have been different about Baton Rouge?

Schooling in Baton Rouge

Objective: To learn about respondents' perceptions of the school system. These questions often naturally came up in relation to the discussion of St. George.

- What is the East Baton Rouge public school district like?
- What about the private/Catholic schools in the area?
  - Themes to ask respondents to define or reflect on further if they arise include: The difference between "good" and "bad" schools; what makes a school "safe" and how safety is evaluated; what it means for students to be learning with "other students like them"
- What do you think schools in an independent St. George district would be like?

City and parish politics

Objective: To engage with the setting of the interview as the campaign for a replacement for the term-limited Mayor-President was gaining momentum ahead of the fall 2016 election, and to explore respondents' level of political engagement.

- Have you had any thoughts about the upcoming election for mayor-president?
- Is there a candidate you are planning to support?
- Is there a particular issue you hope to see addressed?

Outlook on the future

Objective: To explore respondents' evaluations of the trajectory of their area and understand where they identified problems or possibilities. This section of the interview was typically when respondents would bring up the shootings of July 2016 if it had not been referenced already.

- What do think the future looks like for the Baton Rouge area?
- Where would you hope to see the area going in the next few years?
- Do you plan to live in Baton Rouge for the next 5, 10, 20 years?

Concluding the interview

Objective: To end the discussion by gathering more details on respondents' demographics, thanking them for their time, and making sure they don't have any other issues they would like to raise.

- In what year were you born?
- How would you describe your occupation?
- How long have you lived in Baton Rouge?
- Do you have children? If so, where did or do they go to school?
- Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or something else?
- Those are all my questions. Thank you for your time. Is there anything else you would like to ask me?

E.4 Visual Guide to Accompany Interviews

This section reproduces the map of the larger Baton Rouge area with which all interviewees were provided to use as a visual reference when discussing the area (Figure E.1).

Figure E.1: Map of East Baton Rouge Parish



Source: Harvard World Map, http://worldmap.harvard.edu/

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