MISTAKING CONSERVATIVES FOR RACISTS AND RACISTS FOR CONSERVATIVES: THREAT AND THE INTERTWINING OF RACIAL RESENTMENT AND IDEOLOGY

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Abstract

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One of the biggest problems in political behavior research and popular discourse is for conservative attitudes and beliefs to be construed in terms of racial resentment. Furthermore, it is equally problematic for racists to be misconstrued as conservatives. While many examples of the conceptual overlap between conservatism and racial resentment exist in popular political discourse and within the public opinion and political psychology literatures, it is an open question as to whether or not conservatism and racial resentment can become more or less related under certain conditions. In this dissertation, I examine the following research questions: (1) to what extent is the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment moderated by a common covariate such as perceptions of a racial threat? (2) what are the policy implications of this relationship? I argue that the anxiety produced by the threat of racially egalitarian changes in the status quo conditions the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment, ultimately increasing opposition to racial policies. I conceptualize the 2008 presidential election of Barack Obama -- the first African American President of the United States -- as a racial threat some whites perceive and utilize the 1992 and 2008 ANES Time Series Data, the 2006-2010 GSS Panel Data, and the 2007-2009 UCLA CCAP Panel Survey to assess my theoretical claims. I demonstrate that while political
ideology, particularly conservatism, powerfully influences racial attitudes, the liberal-conservative distinctions in racial resentment evaporate under a perceived racial threat, making liberals who perceive such threats indistinguishable from conservatives. I also find that under perceptions of threat, the enhanced effect of racial resentment among political liberals increases opposition to explicitly and implicitly racial policies such as affirmative action and healthcare reform. I conclude this dissertation with a discussion of the implications of these results for political behavior research.
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CHAPTER ONE:
POLITICAL CONSERVATISM IN BLACK AND WHITE

1.1 The Problem

One of the biggest problems in political behavior research and popular discourse is for conservative attitudes and beliefs to be construed in terms of racial resentment – an intense form of prejudice that refers to animosity and moral indignation toward blacks based on perceptions that their continued demands for special consideration are undeserved, unfair, and come at whites’ expense (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Wilson and Davis 2011). It is equally problematic for racists to be misconstrued as conservatives because it may lead to a failure to see racism where it truly resides. For example, the assertion that whites’ opposition to affirmative action policies is prima facie evidence of racial prejudice (Sidanius et al. 2000), the claim that the penalty black political candidates incur because of their race in terms of a lack of support among whites is racial prejudice (Terkildsen 1993; Lublin and Tate 1995), and the contention that racism is now indistinguishable from traditional values embodied by the Protestant work ethic (Sears and Kinder 1971; McConahay and Hough 1976; Sears 1988; Sears and Henry 2003) all stem from the claim that racial resentment and conservatism are inseparable from each other. In each instance there has been heated controversy within political discourse, as well as within the political behavior, public opinion, and political psychology research literatures, about the role of racial prejudice in whites’ political judgments.
The mortgage crisis in 2008 is just one example of how an ostensibly non-racial issue can be clouded by ideology and race. In response to the creation of the mortgage crisis that led to an unprecedented number of banks closing and required a government bailout, conservative commentators like Ann Coulter linked the crisis of lending practices to a form of affirmative action whereby by Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae loan corporations were compelled to give food stamp-backed mortgages to unqualified and undeserving minorities, whose only collateral was having a jump shot or a daughter named ‘Caylee’ (Coulter 2008). Similarly, Rush Limbaugh attributed the mortgage crisis to affirmative action for blacks.

According to Mr. Limbaugh,

Redlining was a bogus charge that lending institutions would look at the race of the applicant and just refuse on the basis of race, not on the basis of anything else, it was racist, redlining was racist, and I don't doubt that it happened in some cases. So the fix for it, always an overstep, it's always an overreach. So to extend the American dream to everybody, they said, "Get rid of redlining and loan money to people that can't pay it back. That's the way we're going to fix it." It's sort of like affirmative action. We're going to not only address the grievances of the past, we're going to go so far beyond addressing the grievances, we're going to create new ones on the other side of the stick. (September 18, 2008)

There is little doubt that political commentators, seeking to be provocative and controversial, exploit the natural or conceptual overlap between conservatism and racial resentment. Again, this is not difficult to envision given that conservative values and beliefs may predispose or lay the foundation for racial resentment. That is, in the minds of whites, legitimate conservative values are likely to be correlated with aspects of racial resentment.

However, beyond political sound-bites, the research literature shows that whites’ reactions to ostensibly racial neutral policies, such as felon disenfranchisement laws (Wilson, Owens, and Davis 2012), and attitudes toward crime (Peffley and Hurwitz 2002) and ameliorative racial policies, such as affirmative action (Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Feldman and Huddy 2005) and welfare (Gilens 2000), are often
clouded by aspects of racial resentment. That is, even though conservatives may have
principled or philosophical race-neutral reasons for objecting to racial policies, their beliefs
about race and the deservingness of blacks frequently carry as least as much weight. Clearly,
the foundation of the intertwining of conservatism and racial resentment is more than just
frames communicated in political discourse, though one cannot discount or minimize their
influence.

Paul Sniderman’s criticism of symbolic racism reflects this seemingly intractable
problem. Although symbolic racism was intended to describe an evolutionary form of
discrete and socially desirable racism, Sniderman’s criticism centered on the motivation and
measurement of symbolic racism posed by David Sears and Don Kinder. Whereas Sears and
Kinder suggested that symbolic racism was motivated by the racial threat or conflict posed
by blacks, Sniderman’s objection suggested that given the conflation of government
involvement in the measures, it was impossible to determine how much of the motivation of
this covert racism was driven by racial animosity (or fear of blacks) versus beliefs about
government. Beliefs about the involvement of government, according to Sniderman, touch
on inherent conservative values of individualism, opportunity, merit, and equality. While
Sniderman is correct in pointing out that measures of racism are often contaminated with
conservative values, specifically beliefs about government in the Sears and Kinder measure,
the problem is in identifying those separate components that are inherently highly correlated.

1.2 The Question

It is generally accepted that individuals who are politically conservative are more
tolerant of inequality because they place a high value on individualism (McClosky 1958;
Lakoff 2002). This predisposition may account for the well-documented relationship
between conservatism and racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears et al. 2000; Sniderman et al. 2000). However, the question regarding the extent to which conservatism is synonymous with racial resentment or if there are conditions under which the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment is exacerbated is unaddressed in the literature.

The questions motivating this dissertation are quite simple: to what extent are conservatives mistaken for racists and racists mistaken for conservatives in their political decisions and support for various policies? In the minds of individual white citizens, is it possible to parse the effects of conservatism and racial resentment in political evaluations? Perhaps more importantly, what conditions are most likely to influence the overlap between conservatism and racial resentment? To what extent is the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment moderated by a common covariate such as perception of a racial threat? What are the implications of all of this for public policies?

1.3 Significance

These questions are of paramount importance. First, if aspects of anxiety contribute to the overlap between conservatism and racial resentment, a huge conceptual and theoretical problem in political behavior and political psychology can be solved. Since the development of authoritarianism, racism has been considered a natural outgrowth of the political right. However, if this relationship between racial resentment and conservatism is conditional upon another concept like anxiety, we may have to reassess how conservatism influences other important concepts. Second, these questions are important because they designate the context (i.e. the psychological and political conditions) within which individuals are making decisions about both conservatism and racial resentment indispensable. Third, the answers to these questions can clarify the conditional aspects of the role of racial
attitudes in American politics, which remains one of the most important, yet contentious, issues in political science.

1.4 The Dissertation at a Glance

My argument is simply that the anxiety that is experienced because of a perceived racial threat conditions the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment. The crux of my argument is as follows: the evolution of the civil rights agenda since the mid-1960s has brought about demands for racial justice that seek to eliminate the existing racial hierarchy in society. Some whites, particularly conservatives, will view such challenges as threatening because such racially egalitarian changes will result in a structural interference with individualistic principles and norms of moral fairness. As whites cope with the uncertainty of change inherent in the loss of their group’s hegemony, conflict with traditional societal values, and gains in standing of African Americans, they will experience a heightened sense of anxiety. Anxiety increases the accessibility of, and reliance upon, negative racial stereotypes and attribution errors, which serve to amplify the derogation of African Americans. Therefore, anxiety makes it increasingly difficult for whites to separate conservative values from the stereotypical images of African Americans as existing in contradistinction to such values. As a result, under conditions of racial threat, conservatives, because they are more likely to perceive such threats, will be high in racial resentment.

However, the positive and significant relationship between ideology and racial resentment that is often taken as a given in the literature becomes more complicated when considering racial threat. For political liberals, the lack of an ideological contradiction with their values makes them less likely to perceive threats. However, the elimination of the racial hierarchy can leave those liberals who do not support giving special preference to guarantee
equality for one group at the expense of others conflicted. In addition, protecting privilege under conditions of racial threat can become important in the face of uncertainty, particularly for less educated and affluent whites. For this group of political liberals, perceived racial threat temporarily suspends the importance of liberal ideological considerations, increases the salience of contemporary information that confirms perceptions of blacks’ undeservingness of equal standing with whites in virtue of their individualistic shortcomings, and intensifies the need to protect the status quo. As a result, liberals who perceive racial threats will experience anxiety just as many conservatives do, which will increase racial resentment among these liberals such that they become indistinguishable from their conservative counterparts. In other words, under perceived racial threat, the relationship between ideology and racial resentment breaks down, and it becomes difficult to pinpoint a racist person when you see one.

The conditional relationship of conservatism and racial resentment with perceived racial threat will exacerbate opposition to racial policies. Racial resentment will increase opposition to racial policies for conservatives, again, because they are more likely to perceive threats. However, even more for those political liberals that perceive racial threats, racial resentment will increase opposition to racial policies to a level similar to conservative opposition.

As a foreshadowing of things to come, the empirical analysis of my dissertation generally supports this claim. Conservatives experience racial threats at rates higher than political liberals. Under perceptions of racial threat, conservatives are racially resentful. For political liberals that perceive racial threats, levels of racial resentment are indistinguishable from those of political conservatives. The finding that under perceptions of threat, the independent effect of ideology, is diminished to non-significance is also politically
consequential. I find that conservatives oppose affirmative action and healthcare reform at high rates whether or not they perceive a racial threat. However, for political liberals, perceiving a racial threat significantly increases opposition to affirmative action and healthcare reform to levels indistinct from conservatives. Finally, these findings reveal that by failing to account for racial threat perceptions, opposition to racial policies among conservatives low in racial resentment is inflated, while opposition to such policies among liberals is underestimated.

1.5 Major Theoretical Concepts

Racial Threat

Within the literature, personalistic, realistic (Blumer 1958; Bobo 1983), environmental (Glaser and Gilens 1997), and contextual racial threats (Green et al. 1998) are all identified as important for understanding whites’ attitudes and feelings toward blacks as well as racial policy opposition. However, in this research, racial threat is conceptualized as a perceived challenge to the racial ordering of society or the racial status quo. It is sociotropic in the sense that it reflects perceived danger to societal conditions, norms, and/or values (Kinder and Kieweit 1981). Racial threat can exist regardless of objective conditions because, with respect to social outgroups, ingroup members are inclined to perceive a threat where objectively there is none in an attempt to avoid costly errors in cognitive judgment (Haselton and Buss 2003). This perception is important because it produces politically relevant consequences (Bobo 1988). A perceived racial threat is not constant and ebbs and flows with political events and circumstances. There are times when a perceived threat to the racial status quo is more intense, and other times when other political issues are more salient. In addition, there can be variation in how racial threat is perceived because some political
events pose a greater danger to racial hierarchy than others. Moreover, some people may perceive more or less of a threat depending the context within which this evaluation takes place.

Perceived racial threat as conceptualized in this dissertation is a departure from the existing literature on threat. Racial threat encompasses prioritizing values and accepting practices at odds with bedrock conservative principles. Demands for equality of outcomes create a fundamental conservative value conflict because race as opposed to individual effort, merit, and ability become the standard for allocating privileges, resources, and power. The elimination of American racial hierarchy, particularly through government intervention, exemplifies social and political upheaval, especially for people who seek to preserve what is established through conservative means and morally prioritize order and the status quo (Lakoff 2004).

*Political Conservatism*

To be politically conservative, an individual must have a psychological attachment to this ideological label and identify as such. While individuals can become conservative for many reasons, two essential and enduring aspects of individuals’ self-identification across different dimensions of conservatism and its issue positions are toleration of inequality and resistance to change (Conover and Feldman 1981; Jost et al. 2003a; McClosky 1958; Wilson 1973).¹ For example, Schwartz (1992, 1994) empirically demonstrated that toleration of inequality through the pursuit of one’s own self-interests, power, prestige, and dominance

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¹ Political conservatism also includes time-variant, peripheral aspects that are situationally determined, such as support for war, attitudes toward the economy and the welfare state, attitudes about the functions of government, and any other issue that prominently appears in policy platforms and political campaigns (Muller 2001; McClosky 1958). Issues that are politically determined are secondary and unstable correlates of conservative behavior (Huntington 1957; McClosky 1958), even though individuals may be drawn to conservative ideology because of these secondary elements and, over time, for a variety of reasons, come to accept and endorse core conservative positions (Layman and Carsey 2002).
over others was strongly and positively related to conservative self-identification. Furthermore, the desire to preserve the societal status quo by controlling social deviance significantly also predicts conservative self-identification (Schwartz 1994). These relationships hold even across economic and social issue domains (Schwartz and Bilsky 1987; Schwartz 2011).2

The roots of the importance of preferences for inequality and resistance to change can be traced to a conservative intellectual tradition by such philosophers as Edmund Burke, Samuel Huntington, Russell Kirk, Fossey J. Hearnshaw, and Clinton Rossiter. These philosophers emphasized that given the inherent imperfection of humans, men are naturally unequal in physical and mental capabilities; social differentiation and inequality of condition is not only inevitable, but desirable; and an established social order in which social and political rights and privilege are determined by social value and effort is a requirement for a civilized society (Hearnshaw 1933; Kirk 1953). This social value is determined by intellect, physical capabilities, material resources, the fulfillment of duties of service, the cultivation of

2 It is important to note that political conservatism is not the same as authoritarianism. While conservatism and authoritarianism are related (Adorno et al. 1950; Altemeyer 1988), authoritarianism has historically been characterized as a negative personality trait, or pathology, which pertains to a relatively consistent, durable disposition across different situations. When politics was centered around the New Deal cleavage, conservatism and authoritarianism were conceptually distinct, but increasingly authoritarianism and conservatism are becoming more closely related with increasing emphasis on political issues that are polarizing in terms of an individual’s worldview (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). Only recently have scholars begun to treat authoritarianism as indicative of ideological attitudes, and evidence suggests that authoritarianism, conceived as a set of attitudes, is still distinct from conservatism (Duckitt 2001). Duckitt and Fisher (2003) argued that authoritarianism contains an aggression component which encompasses support for punitive, harsh social control and conservatism is concerned with conformity and respect for traditional social values, institutions, and authorities. Using confirmatory factor analysis, he found that authoritarian items versus conservative items loaded onto two distinct factors, and these two factors were found to have significantly different correlations to beliefs in a dangerous world and social dominance orientation (Duckitt and Fisher 2003). These authors concluded that even though conservative and authoritarian attitudes were related to each other, “they constitute factorially distinct primary dimensions” which are related in theoretically different ways to other variables (Duckitt and Fisher 2003, 212). Furthermore, conservatism is centrally concerned with maintaining the status quo for the sake of its preservation. The historical survival of an institution – be it marriage, monarchy, slavery, free-market, etc. – for conservatism is prima facie evidence that it has served some need and should be preserved (Muller 2001). Authoritarianism on the other hand supports rapid changes to the status quo for the preservation of order (Feldman 2003; Stenner 2005).
virtue, and the espousal of self-restraint, discipline, piety, reverence, contentment, patriotism, and prudence (Burke 1790, 1882; Rossiter 1964).

Conservative philosophers translated these ideas into a set of values which include, among others, ordered liberty, individualism, anti-egalitarianism, morality, tradition, and conformity, all of which serve to rationalize inequality and the utility of hierarchical socio-political systems (Muller 2001; Harbor 1982; Kerlinger 1984; Rokeach 1973). Anti-egalitarianism stresses the disavowal of equal sharing of outcomes and conservatives use this value to argue against the utility of equality of condition. Conservatives value limited government because, given that the state successfully monopolizes the legitimate use of coercion (Weber 1994), it is the single entity that can legitimately enforce societal arrangements and upset existing social hierarchies. Limited government becomes necessary to prevent social and political leveling. Equally important, individualism stresses the centrality of individual effort and merit, rejects collective entities, and promotes the idea that it is fair to treat people differently based on their talents and efforts. Morality provides immutable moral laws of right and wrong codes of conduct, which conservatives use to unequally designate worthiness of privilege in society (Morone 2003). Ordered liberty – the notion that, in order for men to co-exist civilly with a true sense of freedom, some authority must govern them – is important because it serves as a primary defense conservatives use to justify the need for order and authority that will control human impulses for rebellion and sweeping changes (Kirk 1953). The commitment conservatives have to tradition, authority, and conformity rationalize the idea that the mere survival of a political institution or norm across time is enough to suggest that it has some utility, and should be left intact (Muller 2001).
It has long been observed that, in times of political and social upheaval, political elites have packaged and promulgated the values of conservatism to rationalize the preservation of the status quo (Huntington 1957). The notion that massive socio-political transformation is keenly perceived by conservatives as threatening is not new. Rather, in some sense, the relationships I propose have gone unaddressed. For example, dating back to the French Revolution – which called for a sweeping, radical restructuring of government and societal institutions of authority and power to remove hierarchy, monarchy, and inequality – conservative elites have reacted against the swift upheaval of society, arguing for the preservation of classes, distinctions, and hierarchy. For example, Edmund Burke, the founder of political conservatism in the British-American tradition, argued that an egalitarian remaking of society would pervert the natural social order and “set up on high in the air what is required to be on the ground” (Burke 1790, 437). Burke sought to uphold the existing society in which each individual knew his or her place, and was composed of a protected, satisfied, laborious, and obedient people, taught to seek and to recognize the happiness that is to be found by virtue in all conditions; in which consists true moral equality of mankind, not in that monstrous fiction, which by inspiring false ideas and vain expectations into men destined to travel in the obscure walk of laborious life, serves only to aggravate and embitter the real inequality which it never can remove; and which the order of civil life establishes as much for the benefit of those whom it must leave in an humble state, as those whom it is able to exalt to a condition more splendid but not more happy. (Burke 1790, 431; Burke 1882, 310)

Within the American context, the outpouring of conservatism in the antebellum South in the middle of the nineteenth century was the direct result of industrialism, free labor, and abolition, which challenged its Jeffersonian agrarian heritage (Huntington 1957). In the wake of social upheaval created by the potential spread of communism in the middle of the 20th century, George Nash wrote of the resurgence of conservative values within the American public as a means to defend democracy against a form of government viewed as destructive (Woodard and Dunn 1991). Finally, Clinton Rossiter observed that the political,
social, and economic transformations of the New Deal and Progressive Eras produced a resurgence of conservatism in American society (Rossiter 1954).

Individuals in the mass public who prioritize the pursuit of self-interests as a means of using self-discipline to achieve self-reliance and whose moral priorities include self-control, respect for and obedience to authority, and conformity to strict rules of behavior gravitate toward conservative values and the conservative ideological label (Lakoff 2002), especially during tumultuous times. Political conservatism and its values are appealing to people because they offer cognitively rigid solutions to preserve the status quo, thereby reducing uncertainty of change and providing an outlook that rationalizes existing unequal social systems as legitimate, fair, and most reasonable (Jost et al. 2004b; Tetlock 2007).

McClosky and Zaller (1984) demonstrated that a commitment to limited government and individualism, and a lack of a commitment to equal opportunity are all significantly related to conservative self-identification. Furthermore, these political values were shown to be a function of a more basic need and concern for security, power, achievement, conformity, tradition, and preference for self-direction (Schwartz 1994; Goren 2009), which become highly salient in times of turmoil and large-scale societal transformation (Jost et al. 2004a).

Political Liberalism

To be politically liberal, just as to be politically conservative, a person must have a psychological attachment to the ideological label and identify as such. Unlike for political conservatives, however, the primary basis for identification as a liberal includes the support for social change and the promotion of equality (Conover and Feldman 1981; Kerlinger 1984). These preferences represent the primary distinctions between liberals and conservatives (Jost 2006 Thorisdottir et al. 2007). For example, people who identify as liberal as opposed to conservative place a higher priority on concerns for abstract notions of
justice, achieving social and economic equality, nurturing social ties, helping those in need, and empathizing with the plight and unfair treatment of others (Haidt et al. 2009; Lakoff 2002).

The liberal’s emphasis on social change and equality among all humans can be traced back to a modern liberal philosophical tradition in which liberal thinkers such as John Rawls argued that a commitment to the freedom of the individual and respect for the capacities, rationality, and agency of humans necessarily produce the desire for all aspects of society either be made acceptable for everyone or at least to have such a capability (Rawls 1993; Waldron 1987). This liberal foundation underpins the values of individual liberty and freedom, egalitarianism, and tolerance (Kerlinger 1984), which support the notion that constructive changes in society to foster equality must occur in the social environment within which liberty is realized (Rawls 1993). Individual freedom and liberty refers to the ability of a person to act and think as he or she sees fit (Ashton et al. 2005); egalitarianism stresses the equal distribution of opportunities and resources (McCann 1997); tolerance refers to a person’s willingness to accept or put up with people whose beliefs and behaviors about right and wrong differ from his or her own (Sullivan et al. 1982). These values have been empirically validated as psychologically well matched for individuals who seek new experiences and tolerate ambiguity, both of which help individuals embrace change, especially change in a more egalitarian direction (Jost 2006; Jost et al. 2009). Goren (2009) demonstrated that individuals who prioritize self-transcendence and openness prefer the values of liberalism outlined here and are also more likely to self-identify as politically liberal.

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3 When referring to liberalism, I am referring to modern or contemporary liberalism, not classical liberalism, which is more akin to modern-day conservatism (Dewey and Rogers 2012).
Racial Resentment

The perception that African Americans do not uphold individualistic and moral values is a central aspect of the negative racial attitudes expressed among whites today. In response to changing norms of racial equality and political correctness, the contemporary expression of racial prejudice has become covert and embodied by the belief that “blacks do not try hard enough to overcome difficulties they face and take what they have not earned” (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 105-6). Racial resentment is the hostility toward blacks steeped in anger resulting from the perceived undeservingness of blacks for special advantages based on the view that they make illegitimate, excessive demands and receive unearned opportunities that unfairly disparage whites (Wilson and Davis 2011).

Perceptions of undeservingness stem from negative stereotypes of African Americans having a sense of entitlement and being lazy, irresponsible, morally bankrupt, sexually promiscuous, unwilling to earn their keep, and prone to criminal activity and acts self-indulgence (Hurwitz and Peffley 1997; Peffley and Hurwitz 1997). These stereotypes are perpetuated by frequent accusations of African Americans behaving in ways that are completely at odds with whites’ cultural values and belief system in popular media (Henry and Reyna 2007). For example, in the media, blacks are often portrayed as perpetrators of crimes, while whites are more likely to be portrayed as victims (Romer et al. 1998). Issues of welfare fraud and dependency have been depicted as concentrated within the African American community, especially among black women (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Hancock 2004). These portrayals have been used as evidence that violations of conservative values are intrinsic to African Americans as a group, and serve as justification for the illegitimacy of governmental demands for racial equality and the belief that claims for special treatment are baseless (Reyna et al. 2005; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kinder and Mendelberg 2000).
1.6 Theory of Racial Threat

Racial Threat and the Evolution of the Civil Rights Agenda

How does conservatism become intertwined with race and intolerance? For the past fifty years, one of the most significant sources of social change has been an evolving civil rights agenda. Beginning in the 1960s, the goals of the civil rights agenda were to call attention to the pervasiveness of the Jim Crow ideology of racial bigotry; remove legal racial discrimination; establish race-blind standards for incorporation into political, economic, and social life; and guarantee equality of opportunity for African Americans. The 1964 Civil Rights Act guaranteed equal opportunity, the 1965 Voting Rights Act secured black political enfranchisement, and a standard of ‘intent’ was established such that racial inequality only required evidence of the intent to deliberately achieve a racially discriminatory result.

However, the success of this civil rights agenda did not completely remove a 300-year legacy of structural and institutionalized racism. In order to combat the vestiges of racial inequality, the civil rights agenda had to shift its focus to achieving equality of result, which required a completely different political approach to racial issues. The federal government became tasked with securing preferential treatment for African Americans, which necessarily increased its intervention into the private sector and local government activities.

These changes in the civil rights agenda required a complete dismantling of the racial status quo in which African Americans remain socially, politically, and economically marginalized. School busing and affirmative action in employment and college admissions were political solutions in which government interfered with market forces and social institutions at the expense of individualistic principles of meritocracy (Sniderman and Carmines 1997). Additionally, in the face of de facto racial discrimination, the persistence of racial prejudice, and worsening objective socioeconomic conditions of a large number of...
African Americans, the political exigencies of the evolved civil rights agenda now include establishing a legal standard of “effect.” This new standard holds that racial discrimination can occur even when it appears neutral on its face as long as it can be demonstrated that the actions of the accused systematically reduce representation of blacks.

In general, whites support abstract egalitarian ideas, but are resistant to policies that promote racial equality because they feel unfairly punished for circumstances they neither created nor should be responsible for addressing (Thernstrom and Thernstrom 1997). Whites evaluate civil rights accomplishments and racial issues as a zero-sum loss, which leads to a more anti-egalitarian stance with respect to racial politics (Eibach and Keegan 2006; Eibach and Purdie-Vaughns 2011). These perceptions are so intensely felt that whites dislike blacks because of it (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). Furthermore, in a perverse fashion, whites have become so vehemently opposed to ameliorative racial policies that they have come to perceive anti-black bias as declining over the past six decades and believe that the most significant issue facing society is discrimination against whites (Norton and Sommers 2011; Eibach and Erhlinger 2006).

Politics, at its core, is about the struggle for hegemony, privilege, and the allocation of resources among varying social and political groups. Political choices are usually reduced to zero-sum dichotomies and inherently involve managing conflict among competing, and sometimes clashing, group interests (Schattschneider 1964). For whites, the struggle is to protect and expand privilege. For blacks, the struggle is to acquire power while acknowledging a certain degree of disadvantage. To some degree, whites are likely to oppose political challenges to their position in the racial hierarchy because they want to protect their status. Exposure to the phrase “black leaders asking for affirmative action” is enough to arouse hostility among whites – even among liberals – and this hostile reaction is positively
related to negative racial stereotypes of African Americans (Sniderman et al. 2000). This notion is born out in political and social reality, where opinions of the black political movement were the most negative among whites when civil rights activity was the highest (Bobo 1988), when violence against blacks is positively associated with the belief that they are infringing upon whites’ privileges (Green et al. 1998), and when whites’ perceptions of blacks posing harm to them leads to increased opposition to racial policies (Renfro et al. 2006).

Demands for racial equality of outcomes represent a complete departure from existing social norms and values which have historically upheld the standard that fairness and legitimacy of a person’s privilege in American society should be based solely on individualistic considerations (Hochschild 1995). These societal rules have legitimized and governed the American sociopolitical system, and the political transformation of ameliorating racial inequality signifies a direct challenge to it, endangering whites’ place in society and their way of life. Such an encroachment upon the hegemony whites have historically enjoyed as the dominant group in the American racial social structure is an intrinsic threat to a fundamental component of American society – racial hierarchy (Hochschild 1995; Jackman 1994). As suggested by another body of literature, real threats to the existence, survival, and economic welfare of a group increase hostility toward outgroups who are seen as facilitators (Sherif 1966; LeVine and Campbell 1972). Therefore, it is not a big leap to argue that the political gains of blacks and racial amelioration are likely to be seen as threatening to whites. When a white person perceives that the political gains of blacks encroach upon their entitlements, this potential loss of group position is a source of threat (Blumer 1958). Therefore, contemporary demands for racial parity between whites and blacks epitomize one kind of sociotropic threat whites can perceive.
Political Conservatism and Perceived Racial Threat

Political conservatives will be more likely to experience racial threats because of their particular sensitivity to societal challenges to the status quo generally (McClosky 1958) and their specific commitment to individualism and anti-egalitarianism. Conservatives, because they tend to accept inequality, are less distressed by it and more distressed by subordinate outgroups’ attempts to gain equality and justice (Jost and Thompson 2000). The reordering of the racial status quo to a more egalitarian sociopolitical system directly clashes with conservative values, which provide an ideological justification for opposing any attempt to equalize society on grounds other than individualism and moral justice (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). Furthermore, conservatives are more likely to attribute the persistence of racial disparities to individual shortcomings of blacks (Zucker and Weiner 1993) and to judge the deservingness of blacks for special consideration and the legitimacy of blacks’ demands based on stereotypes of African Americans violating conservative values (Reyna et al. 2005; Kinder and Mendelberg 2000).

The result of the perceived failure of African Americans to do their part to live up to conservative ideals and perceived undeserved claim for racially equal outcomes is intolerance and fierce resistance to changes in the racial status quo. For example, even when affirmative action policies are equivalent, with the exception of the target social group, (i.e. African Americans versus women), conservatives are more likely to evaluate those policies targeted toward blacks in a much harsher light than those that are not (Sidanius et al. 2000). Therefore, conservatives should be especially sensitive to and hostile toward demands for special consideration on behalf of African Americans blacks because blacks are perceived to violate their system of political values.
**Political Liberals and Racial Threat**

Unlike conservatives, liberals are committed to egalitarianism and social change (Kerlinger 1984; Rokeach 1973). Liberals tend to be more open to experiences and more willing to seek out political change and advocate for reform than conservatives (McCrae 1996). Liberals are more likely to attribute the negative conditions of African Americans to societal and systemic conditions because they are more prone to consider explanations of inequality that do not rest solely within the individual (Zucker and Weiner 1993). This combination of values serves as a foundation for promoting tolerance and a collective effort through government to improve conditions for blacks to eradicate the vestiges of racial inequality.

Liberals are less likely to perceive a threat from racially egalitarian changes in the status quo. However, it is important to note that some political liberals may experience such threats. After all, white liberals and conservatives share similar stereotypical beliefs about African Americans – liberals just endorse such views at lower levels (Biernat et al. 1996; Feldman and Huddy 2005). Even if a liberal person supports the notions of equality and equal opportunity, the best means for achieving equality can be contested (Sniderman and Carmines 1997). Catering to the specific demands of African Americans in terms of equality of outcomes may come at the expense of freedoms and opportunity of other groups. If promoting racial equality threatens formal equality of condition for all, including white Americans and other racial and social groups, liberals may become conflicted and also feel threatened.

Furthermore, in the literature, there is a documented asymmetry in terms of perceiving threats between conservatives and liberals. Less educated and politically aware liberals can be just as receptive to threats as conservatives under certain conditions.
(Sniderman et al. 2002). Less educated and politically aware liberals are less likely to integrate and defend ideological positions and more likely to use group considerations in evaluations of political events (Zaller 1992). The elimination of racial hierarchy is a threat to white privilege and group dominance, which liberals typically do not sense because they do not have chronically elevated levels of threat as conservatives do (Altemeyer 1998). As such, liberals are not used to managing threats, and among those least likely to integrate ideological beliefs and most likely to use group considerations, the jeopardy of their racial group’s standing provides a circumstance in which the heightened salience of such considerations could make threats keenly felt.

**Percieved Racial Threat and the Intertwining of Ideology and Racial Resentment**

Perceiving a racial threat biases cognitive activity in favor of preserving the status quo, reducing uncertainty, and eliminating dissonance (Jost and Hunyady 2002). This cognitive bias encourages members of the dominant ingroup to embrace attitudes that are politically conservative (Jost et al. 2007), hostile toward the subordinate outgroup (Branscombe et al. 1999), and supportive of the existing, unequal, and hierarchical social system (Tyler 2006). Perceptions of threat, in general, promote negative outgroup biases and short-circuit cognition by increasing close-mindedness and rejection of ideas that challenge a person’s existing beliefs (Lodge and Taber 2000), reducing the efficiency of processing memories (Blaney 1986), increasing a person’s reliance on stereotypes (Bodenhauser et al. 1994), and biasing cognitive processing of information (Liberman and Chaiken 1993).

Social dominance theory has shown that in response to changes in the racial structure in society, whites seek to maintain the existing sociopolitical system in which they overwhelmingly benefit (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). In response to a threat to the social structure, whites rely on legitimizing myths that support existing hierarchies in society like
conservatism, racial stereotypes, and racial resentment to rationalize racial hierarchy (Sidnaius et al. 2000; Sidanius et al. 2001). For example, in manipulating whether or not conservative subjects were made to feel that liberals threatened their values, Morrison and Ybarra (2009) demonstrated that those who highly identified as conservative reported higher levels of a preference to protect their interests, values, and identity during times of perceived threat from outgroups.

Perceptions of societal threat, or attacks on the legitimacy of a social system, increase people’s use of conservative values to rationalize and bolster the legitimacy of the prevailing system, and the social and economic inequities are defended more rigorously (Jost and Hunyady 2002). Morrison and Ybarra (2008) demonstrated that the perception that an outgroup has the potential to jeopardize an ingroup’s power and resources increase ingroup members’ preference for inequality. Exploiting an actual political event, the 2008 US Presidential election, Morrison and Ybarra (2008) primed Democratic and Republican subjects to believe the frontrunner candidate either belonged to or was opposed to their own political party. This manipulation was designed to evoke low perceived threat (own party), or high perceived threat (opposing party). Those participants in the high threat condition had a higher preference for inequality, and this effect was magnified among those that identified strongly with their party (Morrison and Ybarra 2008).

The reason that perceived racial threats have such an effect is because of anxiety whites feel as they cope with the uncertainty of change inherent in the loss of their group’s political and social hegemony and the challenges to bedrock traditional values (Jost et al. 2003a). This uncertainty about the future is a necessary condition for anxiety or fear (Bower 1988; Eysenck 1992; Lazarus 1991). When whites perceive a threat from African Americans, they can experience heightened fear and anxiety (Cottrell and Neuberg 2005), especially if
the outcome of the threat (i.e. increased black empowerment), is viewed as unfair (van de Bos and Lind 2001; Stephan et al. 1999). This anxiety may lead to deeper thought (Berenbaum et al. 1995), increase citizens’ attention to contemporary information – particularly if it’s negative – about a group targeted as the source of threat (Marcus and Mackuen 1993), and amplify citizens’ negative reactions to violations of behavioral norms those group members (Marcus et al. 1995). In addition, anxiety increases attribution errors and the reliance upon negative racial stereotypes (Feather 2008; Sidanius and Pratto 1999).

Perceiving a racial threat will influence how political and social concepts like conservatism and racial resentment become integrated in individuals’ minds. Individuals possess different cognitive structures that represent organized knowledge of a given concept, its attributes, and relationships among those attributes (Crocker, Fiske, and Taylor 1984). Each cognitive structure helps simplify cognitive processing by grouping concrete instances together into more abstract categories (Huddy et al. 1986). Individuals possess information about racial groups, usually in the form of stereotypes and causal schemata, which structure explanations for a given situation that can include values (Conover 1988). Under perceptions of threat, stereotype-confirming information in cognitive structures becomes chronically accessible (Tiedens 2001), increasing attribution errors (Stephan et al. 2002), and beliefs counter to this information are more readily rejected (Lodge and Taber 2000; Bodenhausen et al. 1994).

When the source of threat is a stigmatized outgroup like African Americans, whites will likely overestimate the occurrence of negative behaviors by this group (Hamilton and Rose 1980), attribute negative qualities as intrinsic to the group, and weight these negative behaviors and qualities more heavily in political judgments (Marcus et al. 1995). Overall, the content of the negative information about blacks is related to their conservative failures,
which bolsters other negative racial attitudes like racial resentment (Reyna et al. 2005). In particular, individualism and anti-egalitarianism are the values that overlap with conservatism and racial resentment because of stereotypical portrayals of blacks’ individualist shortcomings and conservative opposition to egalitarian arrangements in society along racial lines (Sears et al. 2000). Whites are less likely to believe that blacks support their values (Biernart et al. 1996). Even for those whites that do not personally espouse conservative values, perceptions of African American individualistic shortcomings negatively influence whites’ racial attitudes (Kinder and Mendelberg 1995, 2000).

When someone experiences a threat, the increased time and attention given to the co-occurrence of a perceived group with undesirable behavior leads to its increased accessibility for cognitive judgments (Hamilton and Sherman 1994). It has been empirically established that ingrained negative stereotypes of African Americans influence whites’ cognitive processes, even without their knowledge, decreasing positive attributions and increasing negative ones (Brewer 1988; Devine 1989). These implicit biases can be activated to produce racially inequitable and conservatively favorable outcomes (Mendelberg 2002). Therefore, if a white person perceives a racial threat, the belief that African Americans violate conservative values and are undeserving of racially equal results with whites will be chronically accessible because people will pay more attention to the behavior of African Americans which confirms this view.

The frequency of African Americans behaving undesirably is thus likely to be overestimated (Chapman 1967). This overestimation leads individuals to attribute an inherent relationship between the group (i.e. African Americans) and undesirable behavior (i.e. violating conservative values), which over time becomes ingrained in people’s minds (Vedantam 2010; Brewer 1988; Devine 1989). As a result, racial resentment overlaps more
with conservatism because as people cope with the anxiety from perceived racial threat, it becomes increasingly difficult to separate perceptions of and feelings toward African Americans from violations of conservative values.

By racial threat making the simultaneous conservative value conflict and violation of norms of moral fairness for the sake of racial progress for African Americans salient, it thus moderates the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment. Perceptions of threats to the cultural homogeneity of society, or economic stability of a country, increase support for conservative values, which increase prejudice against those targeted as the source of threat (Sniderman and Theriault 2004). Whitely (1999) argued that because a preference for group dominance is rooted in opposition to the redistribution of the benefits that would reconfigure society such that the dominant group would lose wealth, education, and jobs (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 1996), the desire to preserve group privilege will lead those members of the dominant in-group to derogate outgroup members and oppose their efforts to close social and economic disparities. In examining the attitudes of a sample of 429 white heterosexual college students, Whitely conducted canonical correlation analysis and found that preferences for group dominance were significantly related to negative racial attitudes and opposition to equality enhancement of African Americans (Whitely 1999).

These results suggest that political conservatives, in virtue of their commitment to individualism and anti-egalitarianism, are predisposed to perceive racial threats and are more likely to be racially resentful, which means that the influence of threat will affect them at higher rates. It is important to note that conservatives are also more likely than liberals to perceive the world as a dangerous place and more likely to experience chronically elevated levels of threat (Altemeyer 1998). In a meta-analysis of 88 research samples in 12 countries between 1958 and 2002 involving 22,818 individual cases, Jost et al. (2003b) demonstrated
that different types of threat regarding death, the instability of the social system, and perceptions of a dangerous world, were all positively associated with holding conservative attitudes. Therefore, in experimentally manipulated threat conditions, conservatives display high outgroup bias regardless of the threat condition (Nail and McGregor 2009; Nail et al. 2003). So, the positive relationship between conservatism and racial resentment that is consistently observed in the literature may be a function of conservatives consistently experiencing elevated threat levels.

**Political Liberals and the Influence of Perceived Racial Threat on Racial Resentment**

The relationship between ideology and racial resentment becomes complicated with respect to political liberals when considering racial threat. For the most part, political liberals will not perceive racial threats because their values are not being challenged and they are less likely to view blacks as undeserving as compared to conservatives. As such, liberals’ commitment to egalitarianism and social change and tendency to evaluate blacks’ deservingness of consideration for continued racially egalitarian reform beyond stereotypes to include institutional and structural reasons for inequality will produce lower levels of racial resentment than for conservatives.

However, for political liberals, if a racial threat is perceived, it can exert cognitive and emotional influence such that levels of racial resentment look similar to those of political conservatives. Perceptions of threat generally have the effect of increasing attention to contemporary information and its source, and decreasing the reliance on habitual cues (Marcus and Mackuen 1993). The need to reduce anxiety stemming from a perceived racial threat can lead liberals to want to protect what is familiar and support ideas they ordinarily would not (Jost et al. 2004a; Thorisdottir 2007). For example, Jost et al. (2004b), in an experiment, first measured individuals’ self-reported ideological identification and then
randomly primed individuals with either thoughts of their death or thoughts of pain. Subsequently, participants were asked a series of questions measuring support for issue-based conservatism. The results indicated that across the ideological spectrum – i.e., liberals, moderates, and conservatives – when primed with an existential threat, support for conservative ideas increased.

Liberals who perceive threats will be highly reactive because they do not have the chronic elevated threat levels of conservatives under normal conditions and, therefore, do not have as much experience managing such threats (Nail et al. 2009). Perceived threat provides a condition in which ideological considerations such as support for social change are less important while the system-justifying motive becomes temporarily activated (van der Toorn et al. 2011). This motive will lead to the same cognitive biases that anxiety and threat produce for conservatives, which may then increase liberals’ racial resentment as a means of rationalizing the status quo as fair and just (Lerner 1980; Nail et al. 2009). For instance, when threat perceptions are experimentally manipulated such that the “American Dream” is called into question, individuals become increasingly supportive of the values of hard work and self-determination for personal success, even if months prior they explicitly disagreed with such beliefs (Ledgerwood et al. 2011). As a result, levels of liberal racial resentment will look similar to conservatives under racial resentment, making the distinctions between liberal and conservative levels of racial resentment dissipate under racial threat perceptions.

The Policy Implications of Racial Threat

The underlying theoretical idea of this dissertation is that when individuals are exposed to a context and perceive the same threat, they behave conservatively with respect to race. This argument can be applied to whites’ opposition to racial policy preferences. Given that liberal-conservative distinctions in racial resentment evaporate under racial threat
perceptions, the increase in racial resentment among racially threatened liberals will exacerbate opposition to racially ameliorative policies.

Racial resentment in the absence of threat powerfully predicts opposition to racial policies (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kinder and Mendelberg 2000). Racial resentment leads conservatives to oppose racial policies because of the tendency to judge a policy by the perceived deservingness of blacks (Reyna et al. 2006). Yet, the effect of racial resentment in increasing opposition to racial policies is larger for liberals than conservatives (Feldman and Huddy 2005). Conservatives are predisposed to oppose racial policy because of their ideological commitment against distributing resources based on anything but individual merit (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman and Carmines 1997). Therefore, while racial resentment will increase opposition to such policies, such concerns will be secondary for many. On the other hand, for liberals, opposing racial policies contravenes their ideological commitment to utilizing government intervention to create equality for all. So, for political liberals who oppose racially ameliorative policies, they must bypass their ideological principles and race must be the primary consideration (Sniderman and Carmines 1997).

Within the literature, there is a documented pliability, or readiness to change, with respect to whites’ racial policy preferences which is asymmetric (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). Under pressure, liberals are more likely to withdraw support for racial policies (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). Moreover, when a concerted effort is made to offer information to convince individuals to take a position that is ideologically consistent, conservatives are more likely to be convinced than liberals to adopt a position that aligns with their values (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). This pliability in racial policy preferences, especially for liberals, means that while ideology is a powerful determinant, under certain circumstances it is not as powerful in ensuring that this group of people sticks to their
political principles. Given a particular context, such as one of racial threat, other salient considerations, like race, can become especially influential in determining racial policy preferences, particularly for liberals.

When individuals are faced with threat, conservatives across the board become galvanized to support conservative leaders and policies and oppose policies that benefit an outgroup targeted as the source of threat (Sniderman et al. 2002). However, another asymmetry with respect to liberal policy preferences is that, in times of threat, if so experienced, liberals become hyper-reactive and think and behave like conservatives (Nail et al. 2009). Liberals are highly reactive to threat because they do not chronically perceive it in the way that conservatives do (Nail and McGregor 2009). The reactivity to an attack on society and on people’s way of life leads liberals to temporarily favor a conservative outlook and conservative policies because they are cognitively rigid solutions psychologically well matched to manage anxiety related to uncertainty about the future, rationalize the status quo, and protect the individual’s way of life (Jost et al. 2003b; Sniderman et al. 2002).

Empirical evidence of the pronounced conservative shift in times of threat include a study by Landau et al. (2004), which found that after reminding participants of the Al Qaeda attacks on American soil on 9/11/2001, there was increased support for conservative President George W. Bush. More importantly, this increase was greater among liberals than conservatives (Landau et al. 2004). Furthermore, Sniderman et al. (2004) demonstrated that threats to the national identity and culture of a country by outgroups can mobilize individuals on the political left to support exclusionary policies. Nail et al. (2009) demonstrated that under experimentally manipulated threats, liberals will show ingroup favoritism as much conviction in supporting conservative issue positions as conservatives themselves.
Thus, when whites perceive a racial threat, political conservatives, who are more likely to perceive threats and be racially resentful, will also oppose racial policies. However, this opposition will not be particularly elevated above what conservatives who do not perceive threats experience because conservatives as an ideological group are prone to chronically experience threat. The majority of political liberals, given their ideological commitment to social change and the toleration of equality, will not experience racial threats, will have low levels of racial resentment, and will therefore be less likely to oppose racial policies. However, political liberals who perceive such threats will be highly reactive to perceived changes in the racial status quo, which will dramatically increase racial resentment. This increase in racial resentment will further strengthen its influence in producing greater racial policy opposition.

1.7 Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual framework presented above, several hypotheses can be identified. The following are hypotheses that will be tested in the remainder of this dissertation:

**Racial Threat:**

H1: Conservatives are more likely to perceive racial threats than liberals.

H2: Conservatives have higher levels of perceived racial threat than liberals.

**Racial Resentment:**

H3: Under perceptions of racial threat, political conservatism is positively associated with racial resentment.

H4: Perceiving a racial threat for liberals increases racial resentment to levels indistinguishable from conservatives.
Racial Policy:

H5: Perceived racial threat increases the effect of racial resentment in opposing racial polices more for liberals than conservatives.

1.8 Scholarly Contributions

This dissertation examines how whites react to fundamental changes in society along racial lines as well as the consequences of these reactions for the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment. My theory, in expressing that threat perceptions condition the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment, addresses a failure of the literature to explicitly identify and test a mechanism that influences the way in which conservatism is related to racial resentment. For example, Kinder and Sanders (1996) implied but never tested the claim that racial resentment is rooted in whites’ increasing sense of perceived threat posed by African Americans that violate conservative values. These authors stated that

the perception of threat has a systematic foundation, but the foundation is provided not by actual conditions of conflict and competition but by feelings of racial resentment. Threat is not so much a clear-eyed perception as it is an emotion-laden attitude. Whites feel racially threatened because they are predisposed to look at the world that way; they see danger and risk when others, more sympathetic in their racial sentiments do not. (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 90)

My dissertation provides the first test of this assertion.

In conceiving of the change in the civil rights agenda as threat, this dissertation provides a novel contribution to the public opinion literature by moving the discussion of threat away from group-centered and context approaches to more of a focus on how changes in individual perceptions of societal threats contribute to the nexus of racial resentment and political conservatism. In Bobo’s (2000) analysis of opposition to affirmative action, he argued that whites will “oppose affirmative action not so much because they see a
race-based policy as contravening their loftiest 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” (143). Such a limited conception of threat leaves out more recent developments in social psychology which suggest that threats can also be cultural, moral, symbolic, or existential in nature, and that these types of threats to societal norms, institutions, values, and ways of life are just as important for intergroup behavior and opinion formation as concerns over realistic competition (Stephan et al. 2002). Furthermore, previous attempts to measure contextual influences of race through the use of macro-level conditions related to the size of the black population or racial proximity offer no explanation of how these objective conditions get translated into mass-level threat perceptions (Glaser 1994; Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989).

My dissertation may also help clarify the persisting debate over whether or not racial resentment is an independent construct separate from political conservatism. The proponents of racial resentment and symbolic racism and the critics of these theories have come to a stalemate as to whether race matters more than ideology in whites’ public opinion (Huddy and Feldman 2009), although both sides at least agree that both racial resentment and conservatism matter. For example, racial resentment has been shown to be at once a racially specific measure, different from nonracial ideology (Kinder and Mendelberg 2000; Sears and Henry 2003), and at the same time a measure which means different things for conservatives and liberals, with this measure being more associated with ideology for conservatives and more linked to prejudice for liberals (Feldman and Huddy 2005).

The possibility that the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment varies with racial threat, which would account for a great deal of their overall overlap, has been essentially ignored. Scholars working in this area use different datasets, survey
measures, study populations, and methodological strategies at different points in time in American political history. All of these factors combined will produce significant variation in the results of the data. My theory shifts the debate on the role of racial prejudice in whites’ political judgments. Instead of trying to determine if racial resentment matters more than conservatism in opposition to racial policies or black political candidates (Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Feldman and Huddy 2005), or argue for or against whether racial resentment is a racially specific construct separate from ideology (Kinder and Mendelberg 2000), my racial threat theory explicitly identifies a condition -- perceptions of changes to the racial status quo – that produces variation in the relationship between these theoretical concepts.

My dissertation recognizes that both sides of the debate have contributed important insights into the nature of racial resentment and conservatism. I agree with Sniderman’s criticism that the measure of racial resentment most widely used is flawed because its scale items conflate racial concerns with attitudes toward government, and that some conservatives will oppose racial policy on ideological principles that are race-neutral.

However, I do believe that racial resentment is an important concept, and the hostility and indignation at the perceived undeservingness of African Americans is an important development in racial prejudice over the past roughly half of a century. I offer a compromise in this research. It is possible that both sides are right; however, understanding when conservatism and racial resentment can be separated requires that attention be given to when there is more or less overlap between these two concepts. Separating conservatism and racial resentment will be easier in the absence of racial threat perceptions and more difficult when a person perceives this kind of threat.
The positive relationship between conservatism and racial resentment has been clearly established, and is generally taken as given in political behavior, political psychology, and public opinion research. My research identifies a condition under which the ideological distinctions in racial resentment do not hold. The theory of racial threat integrates several theories related to affective-cognitive models of political judgment, ideological reasoning, threat, social dominance, system justification, and racial resentment to understand how changes in society influence political thinking for citizens who occupy positions of privilege.

Most importantly, my dissertation explores one of the biggest problems in political behavior research in an attempt to provide a theoretical account of how changes in society are relevant for opinion formation and political judgments.

1.9 Overview of the Chapters

The remainder of this dissertation is dedicated to formalizing an empirical model of this theory and testing the hypotheses listed earlier in this chapter. This dissertation uses whites’ opinions about contemporary political events and assessments of contemporary political figures and policies to understand its theoretical claims. In doing so, this research describes, explains, and provides supporting evidence of how threat connects political and social concepts in people’s minds and the political ramifications of such connections for leaders and policies.

Chapter Two: Data and Methods

The second chapter discusses the proposed model of racial threat, explains how and why racial threat is operationalized in terms of the election and presidency of the first African American President, Barack Obama, and empirically validates the measures of racial threat. This chapter provides a detailed account of the surveys used – the 1992 and 2008
ANES Time Series Surveys, the 2006-2010 GSS Panel Survey, and the 2007-2009 UCLA CCAP Panel Study – and justifies the use of existing measures of political conservatism and racial resentment. This chapter also explains the survey experiment related to people’s attitudes toward healthcare reform in the UCLA CCAP. Finally, chapter two concludes with a discussion of the analytical strategy employed for the remainder of the empirical chapters of the dissertation.

Chapter Three: Racial Threat, Conservatism, and Racial Resentment in the Age of Obama

The historic election and presidency of Barack Obama provide a unique opportunity to investigate the extent to which the central claims of this dissertation can be applied to actual political events. As such, chapter three will present the results of the analysis of the ANES Time Series Surveys and the GSS Panel Survey, which reveal that conservatives are more likely to perceive threats, especially because of Obama’s election. Furthermore, the effect of conservatism in increasing racial resentment is completely moderated by the racial threat perceptions President Obama evokes.

Chapter Four: A New Normal? The Policy Consequences of Racial Threat and the Correlation between Racial Resentment and Conservatism

The fourth chapter examines the policy consequences of racial threat for racial resentment and political conservatism. Specifically, opposition to affirmative action is shown to be directly and indirectly influenced by whether or not someone perceives a racial threat. In addition, using a survey experiment on the 2007-2009 UCLA CCAP Panel Study on individuals’ attitudes about healthcare reform, it is demonstrated that the effects of the independent and multiplicative effects of conservatism and racial resentment on people’s opinions are strongest for those people who perceive racial threats.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

Finally, the purpose of this last chapter is to summarize the key theoretical insights and empirical findings of the previous chapters. I conclude this dissertation by discussing the implications of the findings, the limitations of the analysis presented, and possible avenues for future research.
2.1 Introduction

The test of the central claim of my theory of racial threat – the relationship between racial resentment and conservatism is moderated by a perceived threat to the racial status quo – rests on the validity of measures of conservatism, racial resentment, and racial threat. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the theoretical model and operationalize the major concepts of my dissertation. I will explain why I selected the racial policies of affirmative action and healthcare reform with a discussion of important shifts in public opinion with respect to these issue attitudes since Obama was elected. I will also explain the way in which perceived racial threat is operationalized and justify this operational definition by providing a descriptive analysis that shows these attitudes are indeed found among whites at the mass level. In addition, I will discuss why political ideology is operationalized in terms of self-placement on an ideological scale consistent with the literature that suggests that this measure is significantly and positively associated with conservative values.

2.2 Proposed Model of Racial Threat

My theoretical model is as follows: first, perceived racial threat serves as a moderating variable that conditions the relationship between racial resentment and conservatism. In this part of the model, the dependent variable is racial threat, and the explanatory variable is political conservatism. Second, perceived racial threat further
moderates the effect of the interaction between racial resentment and conservatism in increasing opposition to such racial policy preferences. In the second part of the proposed model, racial policy preferences are the dependent variable; the interaction between both political conservatism and racial resentment is the explanatory variable; and perceived racial threat is the moderating variable.

2.3 Dependent Variables

Racial Resentment

In the first component of my theoretical model, my dependent variable is racial resentment. I selected racial resentment as the dependent variable because doing so provides a way to assess how much the impact of political conservatism on racial resentment changes when accounting for perceptions of racial threat. This model is the central way to test the conditionality of the relationship of conservatism and racial resentment.

Racial resentment is operationalized according to its conventional understanding, which is based on the work of Kinder and Sanders (1996). According to Kinder and Sanders (1996), racial prejudice among whites today is based on a belief that continued racial inequality between blacks and whites rests within blacks’ inability to capitalize on the opportunities they are now afforded. African Americans are believed to be unwilling to work hard enough to address their own problems and to receive unearned benefits. The negative affective responses to perceived violations of individualistic norms by blacks are formed as a result of pre-adult socialization in conjunction with other social and political attitudes and are expressed in terms of individualism (Kinder and Sears 1981) – specifically, perceptions of blacks’ lack of the Protestant work ethic (Sears and Henry 2003) – and antiblack affect (Kinder and Sanders 1996).
In the second component of my theoretical model, the dependent variable is racial policy preferences. The predictive power of racial resentment and political conservatism in opposition to ameliorative racial policies is not new. However, this model seeks to test the extent to which the effects of racial resentment and conservatism in opposition to racial policies are conditioned by racial threat perceptions.

When referring to explicit racial policy preferences in this research, I am referring to the support, or lack thereof, among whites for affirmative action. I selected affirmative action policy because it is one of the most visible and contested ameliorative racial policies in American politics. Whites are overwhelmingly unsupportive of affirmative action and research empirically demonstrates that both racial resentment and conservatism are powerful predictors of such opposition (Feldman and Huddy 2005; Sears et al. 1997). My theory of racial threat predicts that opposition to affirmative action should increase with Obama’s election, and this prediction has already received some empirical support in the current literature (Kaiser et al. 2009).

Furthermore, trends in public opinion also suggest that Obama’s election has been important for understanding affirmative action. Figure 2.1 shows that in the aggregate, attitudes towards affirmative action are relatively stable with whites consistently opposed to this policy.
Figure 2.1: Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action for Blacks. These graphs represent whites’ aggregate responses from the following question from the 1987-2009 Pew Values Survey: “We should make every possible effort to improve the position of blacks and other minorities, even if it means giving them preferential treatment.” Support is signified by the percentage of whites that agree with this statement and opposition is signified by those who disagree.

At the individual level, a majority of whites believe such programs may force employers to hire unqualified people, and a substantial percentage perceive affirmative action for blacks as unfair to whites (Bobo 2000). In August 2011, 83% of whites did not think new laws were needed to reduce discrimination against blacks (Gallup/USA Today (b) 2011).

According to Valentino and Brader (2011), increased opposition to affirmative action policy
is the result of anxiety whites felt prior to the election and the perception that there is less racial discrimination in American society (Valentino and Brader 2011).

It is important to note that the framing of affirmative action policy yields different levels of support. Whites do not support preferential treatment. In 2007, prior to Obama’s successful 2008 presidential campaign, 39% of whites were opposed to giving special preferences to blacks in hiring and education. Yet, 52% of whites did favor programs that helped blacks get better jobs and education opportunities (Pew Research Center 2007).

However, after Obama’s election, even across different frames of affirmative action, support among whites declined. In 2009, just 22% of whites agreed with the statement that every effort should be made to improve the position of African Americans, even if it means preferential treatment, according to the Pew Research Center published June 2nd. Furthermore, in a 2009 Quinnipiac University Polling Institute national survey of American voters, close to 70% of whites believed that affirmative action programs that give preferences to blacks and other minorities in hiring, promotions, and college admissions should be abolished. Fifty-five percent of whites voter thought we should not have affirmative action programs in the workplace either to remedy past discrimination or promote diversity, and nearly 70% of whites opposed affirmative action programs for blacks in hiring, promotion, and college admissions to increase diversity (Quinnipiac University Polling Institute 2009).

Given these important shifts at the individual level among whites to an even more conservative position toward affirmative action for blacks since Obama’s election, it is imperative to understand the role of racial threat in moderating these developments.

*Implicit Racial Policy Preferences: Healthcare Reform*
Prior research has demonstrated that racial resentment and conservatism significantly influence perceptions related to policies in which African Americans are implicated such as felon disenfranchisement and crime (Wilson, Owen, and Davis 2012; Peffley and Hurwitz 2002). I plan to demonstrate that racial threat perceptions directly increase opposition to ostensibly race neutral policies that are perceived to be linked to African Americans and increase the effect of racial resentment and conservatism in opposition to policies in which race is implicated.

When referring to implicit racial policy preferences, I am referring to attitudes related to healthcare reform. I selected healthcare reform because it is a highly controversial policy which on its surface appears race-neutral. The most intriguing features of politics, especially related to healthcare reform since the election of Barack Obama is the vociferous opposition to ostensibly non-racial policies he has promulgated, the degree to which opposition is racially polarized, and the case with which this opposition has been expressed in hyper-racialized terms. What follows is a brief description of public opinion related to healthcare, which suggests that Obama’s election in conjunction with racial resentment and conservatism is critical for understanding this policy.

Just prior to the passage of healthcare reform in March 2010, 56% of whites did not support their member of Congress voting for the healthcare bill, while 67% of non-whites supported their Congressperson voting for the bill (Gallup 2010). Furthermore, since healthcare reform was passed, about half of whites have an unfavorable opinion of the legislation, while only 30% of African Americans have an unfavorable opinion (Kaiser Family Foundation 2012). In 2009, blacks and whites were concerned about the government becoming too involved in health care; however, in 2012, the percentage of whites who are concerned has increased to 63% while the percentage of blacks who are concerned has
decreased to 36%. Roughly 59% of whites believed that Obama wanted the federal government to eventually take over all aspects of healthcare, according to an August 2009 CNN/ORC Poll. Roughly one-quarter of whites at the end of the summer in 2009 said they would be angry if the healthcare reform Obama and Congress proposed was passed, and this sentiment remained stable through the end of the year (CNN/ORC Poll August 2009; CNN/ORC Poll December 2009).

The political battle for healthcare reform was rife with angry debates, public forums, and town hall meetings, and in some extreme cases, fisticuffs led to arrests and attendees being hospitalized (CNN August 2009). Fifty-six percent of whites felt that individuals making angry attacks against the healthcare bill represented democracy in action, and roughly 35% of whites believed that shouting down supporters was democracy in action (Gallup 2009). Furthermore, approximately 37% of whites reported that the town hall meeting protests against healthcare reform made them more sympathetic to the protestors’ views (Gallup 2009). At the same time that conservative opponents were expressing displeasure with healthcare reform, some virulently racist attendees and protestors painted swastikas outside the office of African American U.S. representative David Scott (D-GA), made calls for the death of the President Obama and his family, and brazenly displayed egregious depictions of racial bigotry.

Figure 2.2 provides a snapshot of these images. The ease with which conservative opposition exploited negative racial biases was alarming. Such displays of racism were not isolated incidents of a few people. Rather, such racial intolerance was commonplace at gatherings of Obama’s opponents, so much so that prominent white liberal Democrats such as former President Jimmy Carter even attributed the antagonism to healthcare reform in
part to racial prejudice (CNN September 2009). Furthermore, the racial hostility that
opponents of healthcare reform displayed prior to its passage, and the opposition among
whites that persists since Obama was elected and became the face of and leading political
figure advocating for this policy, have been empirically shown to be a function of implicit
racial bias, racial resentment, and negative black stereotypes in addition to political
conservatism and being a Republican (Knowles et al. 2009; Tesler 2012). Therefore, I
selected the attitudes related to this policy as a dependent variable to be explained in terms
of the interaction between political ideology and racial resentment, which is conditioned by
perceptions of racial threat.

2.4 Moderating Variable
Perceived Racial Threat

A perceived racial threat is operationalized as the perception that there is a challenge to the racial status quo. According to my theory, these perceptions condition the way in which ideology is related to racial resentment, and this moderating influence exacerbates opposition to racial policy. As such, perceived racial threat is a moderating variable.

The specific challenge to the racial status quo that I examine is the election of the first African American President of the United States, Barack Obama. According to Marcus and Mackuen (1993), an election is threatening because it is a zero-sum challenge for political authority in which competing partisans with conflicting interests and goals are vying for power, resources and influence in society. Political candidates, particularly those new to the electorate, provoke both enthusiasm and uncertainty because political contests are centrally concerned with managing the anxiety that comes from uncertainty surrounding who will win the election in addition to trying to determine whom to support (Marcus and Mackuen 1993). Thus, consistent with other political threats that have been evaluated in the literature, the 2008 election can be analyzed in terms of being a sociotropic threat (Feldman and Stenner 1997).

Given Obama’s manifest connection to African Americans and the heightened salience of racial attitudes during this time (Tesler and Sears 2010), race may have been an inescapable component of this threat. Prior to the 2008 election, whites, as the racially dominant group, monopolized presidential politics in terms of electoral victories, political representation, and accountability (Griffin and Newman 2008). When Barack Obama received the Democratic Party’s endorsement, it legitimized his presidential candidacy, made him the first African American to become the face and leader of the Democratic Party, and signaled the onset of increased black political advancement. Furthermore, once he was
elected, for the first time in history a black man became the leader of the free world and occupied the most powerful political position attainable in the United States. As the Commander in Chief, President Obama was given an expansive set of presidential powers as a wartime president in the post-9/11 era with the ability to set the political agenda and influence public thinking. Thus, the Democratic nomination and successful election of Barack Obama as the nation’s 44th President fundamentally disrupted the status quo and exemplifies a racial threat whites may have perceived.

The emphasis placed on the racial significance of the election of the first black president in the media and the lively political and intellectual debate about the meaning of electing a black president – whether or not Obama represented racial transcendence and the implications of this election for black political interests and involvement – increased the accessibility of racial considerations in the minds of voters and framed the election in racial terms for some individuals (Sinclair-Chapman and Price 2008; Tesler and Sears 2010). The historical magnitude of the 2008 election was keenly felt in the public.

Below is a descriptive analysis of attitudes during the time of Obama’s election and after, which suggests that some whites did experience Obama’s election as threatening, and thus it is valid to use this example in politics to examine my theoretical claims. According to Figure 2.3, immediately after the election about 73% of whites felt that the election of President Barack Obama represented one of the most important advancements for African Americans in the last hundred years. Almost a year later, in October 2009, a majority of whites still believed this electoral victory was one of the most important advancements for blacks. Finally, in August 2011, a sizeable portion of whites – close to 40% – still felt Obama’s election was at least one of the most important advancements for blacks.
However, not all Americans embraced this change in the racial status quo positively. Obama was relatively new to national politics at the time of his election, only having served in the US Senate for two years prior to his presidential bid. Equipped with a substantial amount of power never before residing in the hands of an African American person, whites did not have a great deal of information about how he would lead the nation. In the absence of information to the contrary, fear of black radicalism may have overpowered other political predispositions among some whites, and led these individuals to believe a black person, once gaining political office as an executive, will serve black interests to their detriment (Hajnal 2007).

Figure 2.4 shows that, immediately after the election, 11% of whites felt that race relations grew worse because Obama was elected. Agreement with this perception has only increased in the years since Obama was elected. For example, the percentage of whites perceiving Obama’s election as lead to worse race relations increased over ten percentage points in October of 2009 and August of 2011.

In addition, Figure 2.5 shows that when whites were asked to assess the long-term impact of Obama’s election on race relations, in October 2009 close to 15% said that race relations would get worse because of Obama’s election. In August 2011, 11% of whites held this view.
Figure 2.3: Public Attitudes about Obama’s Election for Black Advancement. Source: Gallup/USA Today Poll. White American adult samples are as follows: November 5, 2008: N=815, October 16-19, 2009: N=917, and August 4-7 2011: N=779. Data are weighted for comparability across surveys. The full question wording was as follows: “How do you view Barack Obama’s election as president (in 2008) in terms of progress for blacks in the United States—as the most important advance for blacks in the past one hundred years, as one of the two or three most important advances for blacks in the past one hundred years, but not the most important, important, but not among the most important advances, or not that important?”
Figure 2.4: Public Attitudes about Obama’s Election. Source: Gallup/USA Today Poll. White American adult samples are as follows: November 5, 2008: N=815, October 16-19, 2009: N=917, and August 4-7 2011: N=779. Data are weighted for comparability across surveys. The full question wording was as follows: “As a result of Barack Obama’s election (as president in 2008), do you think race relations in this country have gotten a lot better, gotten a little better, gotten a little worse, or gotten a lot worse?”
Figure 2.5: Public Attitudes about Obama’s Election for the Future. Source: Gallup/USA Today Poll, October 16-19, 2009 with N=917 white American adults, and August 4-7 2011 with N=779 white American adults. Data are weighted for comparability across surveys. The exact question wording for this item was as follows: “In the years ahead, as a result of Barack Obama’s presidency, do you think race relations in this country will get a lot better, get a little better, not change, get a little worse or get a lot worse in the long term?”
Moving from cognitive assessments of Obama’s election to emotional responses, the anticipation of Obama’s electoral victory was enough to elicit negative affective reactions. Figure 2.6 shows that one month prior to the 2008 election, according to the Mid October 2008 Political Survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 72% of white registered voters said they would be worried if Barack Obama won the 2008 election.4 Immediately after the election in November 2008, respondents were re-interviewed and 43% of white registered voters reported that Obama made them uneasy. Furthermore, out of all white registered voters who said they would be worried if Obama won in October 2008, after he won about 21% said that race relations would get worse because of his election. Approximately 31% of white voters who felt uneasy about Obama in after the election also felt that race relations would get worse.

Table 2.1 shows that approximately 22% of whites were uncomfortable with and another 22% not pleased by the idea of having a black president. In addition, immediately after Obama’s election, roughly 20% of whites and 34% of white conservatives felt that race relations would get worse as a result of Obama’s electoral success. Among white conservatives, roughly 27% were uncomfortable and another 27% not pleased with the election of a black president. According to data collected from the Cooperative Campaign Analysis Project, among those interviewed in November 2008 after the election, roughly 20% of whites and 34% of white conservatives felt that race relations would get worse as a result of Obama’s electoral success.

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4 The 2008 Mid October Political Survey and November 2008 Reinterview Survey comprised samples of registered voters, not the entire population, which is why, in discussing the survey results of these data, I do not generalize to all white Americans.
Figure 2.6 Emotional Reactions to Obama’s Electoral Victory. Source: Mid-October 16-19, 2008 Political Survey and November 6-9, 2008 Reinterview Survey. Sample size is N=1,207 of white registered voters. The exact question wording for the worried item was as follows:

*If Barack Obama were to win the (2008 presidential) election this fall, how would you feel about it?*

*Would you feel...worried, or not?*

The exact question wording for the uneasy item is as follows:

*Does Barack Obama make you feel...uneasy or not.*
TABLE 2.1

PERCEPTIONS OF A BLACK PRESIDENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures of Racial Anxiety</th>
<th>ANES Nov. 2008 Panel Survey</th>
<th>CCAP Study Nov. 2008</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not comfortable with</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>election of Black President</td>
<td>(N=2,203)</td>
<td>(N=2,433)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not pleased with</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>election of Black President</td>
<td>(N=2,196)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Race relations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>after Obama</td>
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<tr>
<td>victory will get</td>
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<tr>
<td>worse</td>
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White

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=2,203)</td>
<td>(N=2,433)</td>
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White Conservatives

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=1,131)</td>
<td>(N=934)</td>
<td></td>
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White Liberals

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(N=707)</td>
<td>(N=523)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Immediately after Obama’s election, roughly 26% of whites believed that Obama would go too far in promoting efforts to aid black communities. Roughly a week before President Barack Obama was inaugurated in January 2009, over two-thirds of whites did not feel that his election was a dream come true for them personally, and close to 70% of whites felt that blacks would gain influence by Obama taking office.

By August 2009, a poll by the Economist/YouGov revealed that almost 40% of whites, and 65% of Republicans, thought Obama’s policies favored blacks over whites (Economist/YouGov 2009). Figure 2.7 shows that in October 2009 and in August 2011,

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almost one-third of whites believed Obama’s policies would go too far in helping blacks.

In sum, this descriptive analysis suggests that a non-trivial proportion of whites did experience racial threat and anxiety because Obama was elected in 2008.

Figure 2.7: Public Attitudes about Obama’s Policies. Gallup/USA Today Poll, October 16-19, 2009 with N=917 white American adults, and August 4-7 2011 with N=779 white American adults. Data are weighted for comparability across surveys. The exact question wording for this item was as follows: “Next we have a question about a president's policies to help improve the standard of living of blacks in the United States. Do you think the policies of Barack Obama will go too far, will be about right, or will not go far enough in promoting efforts to aid the black community?”
2.5 Explanatory Variable

*Political Ideology*

Political ideology is a well-established correlate of racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears et al. 2000; Kinder and Mendelberg 2000), and is central to racial policy preferences (Reyna et al. 2005; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman and Carmines 1997). In fact, criticism of racial resentment being defined solely in terms of conservatism and opposition to racial policy being construed as racist is the impetus for this research. The model of racial resentment assesses the conditionality of the influence of political conservatism given variation in racial threat perceptions. The model of racial policy preferences investigates the extent to which the role of political principles is exacerbated by racial threat perceptions. Therefore, ideology is included in both models as the explanatory variable.

I operationalize political ideology in terms of self-placement on an ideological scale. Ideology is operationalized in this way because self-identification with an ideological label is associated with individuals’ broader commitments to resisting versus promoting change and accepting versus rejecting inequality across the public (Conover and Feldman 1981). These commitments are the key way to distinguish between liberals and conservatives. Furthermore, according to the theory of racial threat, these commitments are important for understanding how whites come to perceive threats.

However, I do assume that self-identification reflects those commitments as well as a prioritizing of individualism and anti-egalitarianism as values. There is considerable heterogeneity with respect to the meaning citizens assign to ideological labels (Feldman and Johnston 2011), particularly for conservatives (Stimson 2004; Ellis and Stimson 2007). Furthermore, there are systematic differences in how a person applies ideological labels
(Jacoby 1995), and people possess attitudes across social and economic ideological domains that, while increasingly related, remain independent (Layman and Carsey 2002).

It is important to note that heterogeneity in terms of the meaning of ideological labels has only been empirically demonstrated with respect to people’s issue preferences. When ideology is operationalized as a broader commitment to accepting versus rejecting inequality, and resisting versus supporting social change – as is the case in this dissertation – the issue of heterogeneity becomes less significant (Conover and Feldman 1981; Jost et al. 2003a). Further, Thorisdottir et al. (2007) argued that socially conservative issue positions reflect a general commitment to maintaining the social order and rejecting changes to traditional institutions and beliefs, and economically conservative issue preferences involve a commitment to capitalism and free markets which preserve, justify, and even magnify inequality. Using a structural equation model, Thorisdottir et al. (2007) demonstrated that the values of traditionalism – an aspect of resistance to change – and inequality were positively associated with self-identification with a right-wing political orientation. Goren (2009) in a series of OLS models demonstrated that the conservation values of respecting tradition and being devout -- which are both aspects of being resistant to change -- are associated with pro-conservative issue attitudes and self-identification. Self-transcendence values of equality and tolerance are negatively associated with support for socially and economically conservative policy attitudes and conservative self-identification and positively associated with liberal policy attitudes and liberal self-identification (Goren 2009).

Self-identification with an ideological label has also been shown to measure the same underlying psychological construct as and be correlated with other measures of conservatism, including individualism, anti-egalitarianism, limited government, and moral
traditionalism as a set of value priorities (Schwartz 2011; McClosky and Zaller 1984). Furthermore, self-identification with an ideological label has also been empirically demonstrated to be related to constraint across a set of economic and/or social issue preferences which prioritize one or more of the following: limited government and regulation, free markets, militarism in foreign policy, and increasingly, social programs that combat increased secularism, (Buckley 1955; Treier and Hillygus 2009).

Conservative Values

In addition to a single measure of conservatism, this dissertation makes extensive reference to the importance of conservative values in contributing to the overlap in conservatism and racial resentment. Specifically, I have argued that individualism and anti-egalitarianism are critically important values that influence the degree to which the relationship between racial resentment and conservatism becomes stronger with perceptions of racial threat. Individualism as a principle is the belief that people should get ahead in life based on their own hard work and merit. Anti-egalitarianism is the acceptance and support of inequality in society. Research has empirically demonstrated the importance of individualism and anti-egalitarianism in racially resentful attitudes (Sears et al. 2000; Kinder and Mendelberg 2000) and racial policy preferences (Rabinowitz et al. 2009). However, I assume that ideological self-identification captures prioritizing these values. This assumption is consistent with the research documented above that demonstrates that these values are measuring the same underlying concept as ideological affiliation.

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8 An analysis of the relationship between self-identification with an ideological label and conservative values occurs in chapter 3 in order to establish the validity of this assumption.
2.6 Control Variables

In addition to political ideology and perceived racial threat, the proposed model will also include control variables where necessary to account for alternative explanations related to racial threat, racial resentment, and racial policy preferences. Specifically, I will add controls for political and social attitudes and values learned through political socialization processes that may influence a person’s level of racial resentment or account for racial threat perceptions, including racial stereotypes, anti-black affect, anti-Muslim affect, concern about increased black empowerment, partisanship, and political awareness. I also add controls for socio-demographic characteristics including age, education, being a female, residing in the south, and level of income.
CHAPTER THREE:
RACIAL THREAT, CONSERVATISM, AND RACIAL RESENTMENT
IN THE AGE OF OBAMA

3.1 Introduction

Chapter three provides a direct test of the claim that the relationship between political ideology and racial resentment is conditional upon perceived racial threat. As such, I introduce two datasets and corresponding measures that will be used in the empirical analysis of my dissertation. Next, I make the assumptions of my models explicit and provide evidence that such assumptions are valid. Then, I test the hypotheses for racial threat and racial resentment. This chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings.

To begin, the data and measures used in this chapter come from the 1992 and 2008 ANES Post-Election Time Series Surveys, as well as the 2006-2010 General Social Survey Panel. The empirical models constructed in this chapter assume that my measure of political ideology (i.e. self-placement on a single-dimensional ideological scale) correctly identifies conservatives. These models also assume that measures of racial resentment are stable over time.

Beginning with the ANES data, analysis of the 1992 and 2008 Post-Election data demonstrates that the anxiety individuals experience in relation to Obama is a function of concerns about black empowerment and that such racial concerns are not significant for a previous similarly liberal, but white, Democratic president – Bill Clinton. Using the 2008 ANES data, I show that differences in perceived racial threat between liberals and
conservatives increases from Obama’s nomination to his election, and I show that Obama’s
election increases the effect of conservatism in perceiving racial threats. Finally, an analysis
of the 2008 ANES Post-Election Survey indicates that perceptions of racial threat in the
election increase the impact of conservatism on levels of perceived racial resentment.
Additionally, this analysis demonstrates that while political liberals are least likely to perceive
racial threats, the independent effect of racial threat on racial resentment among those that
do is stronger than that same effect for conservatives.

To supplement the findings in the ANES, I use the 2006-2008 General Social Survey
Panel data to show that the time leading up to Obama’s nomination is associated with higher
racial resentment than the time after Obama secured the Democratic nomination for
political liberals. Moreover, during this time, levels of racial resentment between liberals and
conservatives do not statistically differ from each other. However, this analysis also
demonstrates that the racial threat inferred from Obama’s successful nomination is
associated with higher levels of racial resentment for conservatives; thus, the difference
between liberals and conservatives becomes statistically significant.

3.2 1992 and 2008 ANES Data and Measures

Data

This dissertation utilizes the 1992 and 2008 ANES Time Series Surveys. The 1992
and 2008 presidential elections both had no incumbent and a Democratic winner who was
perceived to have ties to the African American community. In 1992, the Democratic
presidential nominee and winner – President Bill Clinton – was white and, in 2008, the
Democratic nominee and winner – President Barack Obama – was African American. The
1992 presidential election allows for the distinction between political threats inherent in
presidential elections versus racial threat. The historic 2008 presidential election provides a set of circumstances that make it possible to test the extent to which threat perceptions related to racial progress condition the relationship between racial resentment and political conservatism.

The 1992 study comprised a representative cross-section of American adults, but also included an empaneled portion of the final wave in the 1990-1992 three-wave study. In the post-election survey, a total of 1,717 white adults were re-interviewed from November 4, 1992, through January 13, 1993. The response rate was roughly 92% among panel respondents and approximately 89% for cross section respondents. In the February 2012 release of the 2008 ANES Time Series Study, there were a total of 1,098 interviews of white respondents conducted from November 5 through December 30, 2008. In this post-election survey, the minimum response rate is 53.9%; the estimated rate is 57.7% and the maximum rate 70.8%.9

Measures

Racial Resentment

Racial resentment is measured using the following items, which comprise the Kinder and Sanders (1996) racial resentment scale:

1.) It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites; 2.) Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve; 3.) Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up; blacks should do the same without any special favors; and 4.) Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

The four-item scale is reliable with $\alpha=.75$ in 1992 and $\alpha=.70$ in 2008.

9 The data were restricted to non-Hispanic whites given the theoretical claims I make in the previous chapter of my dissertation. In addition, post-stratification weights will be used to account for oversamples when comparing results across studies.
Perceived Racial Threat

I adopt an approach similar to Marcus and Mackuen (1993), where emotional responses are used as proxies for threatening conditions they create. Marcus and Mackuen (1993) created a threat measure by averaging across the negative and positive affective evaluations of presidential candidates – which connote anxiety and enthusiasm respectively – and subtracting these scores from each other (see also Marcus et al. 2000; Marcus et al. 2006). Other research, such as the work of Feldman and Stenner (1997), has adopted similar techniques summing up the number of negative and positive affective responses to political candidates and taking the difference. Racial threat perceptions are more concerned with a specific person or event that has the potential to, or will, eradicate the unequal racial hierarchy in society and less with the relative negativity in a political contest or average emotional negativity political candidates may arouse. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on those political situations and figures that create such concerns, i.e. the election and practice of having a black president.

Taking advantage of a survey experiment in which subjects were randomly assigned to provide affective responses to either the nomination or election of Barack Obama, I created a measure of perceived racial threat or anxiety with respect to the nation’s first African American Democratic nominee and President. In the 2008 ANES, a survey-experiment was conducted such that subjects were randomly assigned to provide affective responses to either the nomination or election of Barack Obama. These conditions allow for

---

10 Since perceived racial threat is operationalized in terms of how individuals evaluate the 2008 election, it is broader than perceived competition for, or conflicting interests with respect to, material resources between blacks and whites (Bobo 1983; Bobo and Hutchings 1996), the size and/or proximity of the black population relative to whites (Glaser and Gilens 1997), or the degree of racial heterogeneity amongst blacks and whites in a community (Green et al. 1998). As such, these measures are inappropriate for analysis in this dissertation.

11 In addition, as a practical consideration and limitation, the ANES 2008 Post-Election Survey only asks questions with respect to people’s affective evaluations of President Obama’s victory. Therefore, I cannot create a relative measure.
an examination of the extent to which whites perceive a racial threat because of Obama’s
election and whether they feel the election is more threatening than the Democratic
nomination.

Subjects received one of these two versions of the question: “we are interested in how
you felt when you first learned that Barack Obama had become the Democratic nominee for President… At
the time, did you feel…” OR “we are interested in how you felt when you first learned that Barack Obama
had won the presidential election and John McCain had lost. Did you feel…”12 After this prompt,
subjects were asked if they felt afraid, proud, and hopeful.13 If respondents gave an
affirmatively response to an item, they were subsequently asked if they felt a given emotion
strongly or not so strongly. First, I created three emotional variables where “0” indicated
that a person did not experience a given emotion, “1” implied that they experienced the
emotion, but not so strongly, and “2” implied that they strongly held a given emotion. I
averaged individuals’ responses to the proud and hopeful items to create a measure of
enthusiasm for Obama, and subtracted this score from individuals’ score on the afraid
item.14 This created a relative threat measure, which ranged from -2 to 2 in increments of
0.5, with positive scores indicating a person experienced more anxiety than enthusiasm.

12 It is important to note that those respondents who were randomly assigned to report their affective
evaluations about the nomination were being asked retrospectively about how they felt. This may lead some
respondents to understate their emotional reaction to Obama’s nomination. In some ways these affective
evaluations are a conservative indicator of how people felt because it asks respondents to recall feelings from
roughly five months prior.

13 According to work by Watson et al. (1998) and Marcus et al. (2006), fear is an emotional response that is a
reliable indicator of anxiety, and pride and hope are reliable markers for enthusiasm.

14 In addition to the three affective evaluations mentioned above, respondents were also asked to assess how
happy, angry, and disappointed they felt with regard to either the nomination or election. I omitted anger as an
affective evaluation because anger emerges as a distinct response to stimuli for different theoretical reasons
when there is no uncertainty involved, and has been shown to produce diametrically opposite effects on
political cognition (Lazarus 1991; Huddy et al. 2007; MacKuen et al. 2010; Peterson 2010). It is also important
to note that within the sample only a very small number of whites actually felt anger about either Obama’s
nomination (N=37) or his election (N=65). In addition, I omitted happy and disappointed from the analysis to
be consistent with recommendations for best practices in measuring anxiety and enthusiasm in politics (Marcus
et al. 2006).
Overall, the average score on this measure for whites was -.61 (SD=1.3), and roughly 20% of whites scored above 0, or experienced more anxiety than enthusiasm with respect to either the nomination or election of Barack Obama.\(^{15}\)

**Political Ideology**

Political ideology is represented as a person’s placement on a 1-9 ideological scale where 1=very liberal and 9=very conservative.\(^{16}\) In 1992, approximately 35% of whites at least leaned politically liberal, about 7% of whites were truly moderate, and nearly 60% of whites identified as at least leaning conservative in 1992. In 2008, roughly 23% of whites were at least leaning liberal, approximately 28% of whites identified as moderate, and close to 50% of whites identified as at last leaning conservative.

**Perceived Political Threat**

The purpose of this variable is to test the extent to which perceived racial threat can be reduced to ideological, non-racial factors. Perceived political threat is operationalized in terms of the anxiety people experienced because of Bill Clinton in the 1992 election. The 1992 ANES asked respondents the following: “Think about Bill Clinton. Has Bill Clinton – because of the kind of person he is, or because of something he has done – ever made you feel…” Response categories were 0=no and 1=yes. Respondents were not asked how strongly they felt;

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\(^{15}\) This dissertation uses the terms “threat” and “anxiety” to encompass all of the negative emotions some whites felt due to Obama’s election and nomination. These two concepts exist along the same continuum – anxiety is the emotional reaction to an uncertain threat, for which individuals expect the worst (Davis 2007). Operationalizing threat in terms of anxiety is consistent with ways in which sociotropic and political threat is measured in the literature (Marcus et al. 2000).

\(^{16}\) Originally, ideological self-placement was a 7-point scale. However, respondents who reported that they did not know or had not thought much about where they would place themselves on the scale were asked what their affiliation would be if they were compelled to choose – liberal, conservative, or moderate. I recoded the scale such that those individuals who said they did not know but identified as liberal or conservative were considered leaners, which created two additional categories. I left those individuals who said moderate as the middle category.
however, I created an average score for the hope and proud items and then subtracted this score from the response to the afraid item. This measure resulted in a -1 to 1, a five-category variable where a score above 0 indicates that a person is experiencing more anxiety than enthusiasm with respect to Bill Clinton. The average score on this measure was -.08 (SD=.63), and roughly 23% of whites experienced some level of anxiety over and above enthusiasm.\textsuperscript{17}

**Conservative Values**

These variables are used to assess the validity of the assumption that self-identification on an ideological scale and conservative values are related enough to justify the use of the single measure of self-placement to capture both concepts. The only item available to create a measure of individualism in the 2008 ANES is a measure of preferences for government guaranteeing jobs.\textsuperscript{18} This measure is as follows: “Where would you place YOURSELF on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?” Respondents were asked to place themselves on a scale ranging from 1-7, where 1 denotes that the government should provide jobs and a standard of living and 7 denotes that the government should let people get ahead on their own. Issue attitudes are sometimes used as proxies for political values and perform in the hypothesized direction of influencing racial attitudes and policy preferences (Tesler 2012; Hurwitz and Peffley 1987; Feldman 1988). This measure is far from ideal;

\textsuperscript{17} This variable is the non-racial analogue to perceived racial threat. I performed a robustness check to ensure that this variable, as well as the perceived racial threat variable, worked in accordance with the Affective Intelligence (AI) Model that Marcus and Mackuen (1993) developed to explain how emotional reactions to electoral threats are political important. Specifically, the AI model postulates that when individuals are threatened by a candidate of their own party, defection should increase. I tested this claim and found that as threat increases by one unit, defection increased in 2008 by a factor .81 and in 1992 by a factor of 1.4, all else being equal. This evidence suggests that these variables are operating as expected and can be compared in terms of their correlates.

\textsuperscript{18} This measure conflates individualism as a value with ideas about government. Also, in performing robustness checks this measure does not predict the outcomes it is suppose to predict, such as other issues preferences related to government spending. Therefore, in the models of threat, racial resentment, and conservatism, this measure is not utilized.
however, it is a variable that I will use to test the assumption that self-identification on an ideological scale captures a person’s commitment to individualism. The average score on this item in 1992 was 4.5 (SD=1.7), and in 2008 the average score was 4.6 (SD=1.7).

The crux of anti-egalitarianism lies in the absence of concern for, and opposition to, equality, broadly speaking. In the ANES, the anti-egalitarianism scale is measured by how strongly respondents agree or disagree with the following six statements: “we have gone too far in pushing for equal rights; society should make sure everyone has equal opportunity, it’s a big problem that we don’t give an equal chance to all; we’d be better off if we worried less about equality; it’s not a problem if some have more of a chance in life than others; and if people were treated more fairly there would be less problems.” The reliability coefficient for this scale is $\alpha=.72$ for 1992, and $\alpha=.66$ for 2008.

Concerns about Black Empowerment

This variable is important for determining if racial concerns about blacks gaining standing society and politics are driving racial threat perceptions. The 2008 ANES features the following item that was used to create an indicator variable: “Would you say that blacks have TOO MUCH INFLUENCE in American politics, JUST ABOUT THE RIGHT AMOUNT of influence in American politics, or TOO LITTLE influence in American politics?” Responses were given a code=1, which indicates that a respondent felt African Americans have too much political influence, and about 10% of whites in the 2008 ANES held this belief.

In 1992, this measure was not available, so I created a summary measure of concerns about black empowerment using the following items:

- In the past few years, we have heard a lot about improving the position of black people in this country. How much real change do you think there has been in the position of black people in the past few years: a lot, some, or not much at all? Some say that the civil rights people have been trying to push too fast. Others feel they haven’t pushed fast enough. How about you: Do you think that civil rights leaders are trying to push too fast, are going too slowly, or are they moving about the right speed?
Each variable was made an indicator such that a code=1 was given to those who felt that a lot of change has been made for blacks or that civil rights leaders are pushing too fast. I averaged the responses that produced a variable with a 0-1 range and a .5 middle category. I dichotomized this variable such that a code=1 indicates that someone perceives blacks have made a lot of progress and civil rights leaders are pushing too fast, with roughly 45% of whites holding these perceptions.

Control Variables

Anti-black affect is the score a respondent gave for African Americans subtracted from the score that a respondent gave for white Americans, which provided a relative measure ranging from -100 to 100 with increasingly positive scores reflecting more positive feelings toward blacks. In 1992, the average relative score was 6.8 (SD=31.01), and in 2008, the average relative score was 6.95 (SD=18.6). I created relative measures for both the intelligent and hardworking stereotypes by subtracting respondent’s black score from the white score. I averaged these items with positive scores indicating endorsement of negative stereotypes, ranging from -9 to 9. In 1992, the average relative score was .14 (SD=.80), and in 2008 the average score was .73 (SD=1.1). In order to account for the possibility that racial threat perceptions could result from concerns about Obama’s ‘otherness’ stemming from his uniquely Muslim roots, I created a measure of anti-Muslim affect by taking the feeling thermometer score a respondent gave Muslims subtracted from the score that a respondent gave Christians, which provided a relative measure ranging from -100 to 100 with higher scores indicating anti-Muslim affect. I then collapsed the categories into a dichotomous variable such that a score above 0 signifies negative Muslim sentiment, and roughly 23% of whites expressed such negative feelings. I added controls across all models for the following...
continuous variables: partisanship ranging from 1=strong Democrat to 7=strong Republican; age in years; education ranging from 1= less than high school diploma to 7=advanced post-graduate degree; and household income ranging from less than $2,999.00 to over $150,000.00. I also controlled for the following dichotomous variables: being a female (code=1) and living in the South (code=1).

3.3 2006 – 2010 GSS Data and Measures

Data

This dissertation will also supplement the analysis from the ANES surveys using the 2006-2010 General Social Survey (GSS) 2006-2010 Panel Survey. This panel allows for an assessment of the impact of attitudes prior to and after the 2008 election amongst the same individuals, which is a distinct advantage over time series data when trying to determine the effect of the presidential election on political and social attitudes. In the 2006 wave, there were a total of 1,464 White Americans; in 2008 there were a total of 1,208 whites; and in 2010, there was a total of 1,005 for whites.

Measures

Racial Resentment

In the GSS, the only item from the Kinder and Sanders (1996) scale in the survey asked is the following question: “Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.” Following Kinder and Kam (2009), I constructed an alternative racial resentment index from that item and two

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19 In 2008, the GSS switched from a repeating, cross-section design to a combined repeating cross-section and panel-component design. In 2008, there was a new 2008 cross-section with 2,023 cases and 1,536 respondents were reinterviewed from the 2006 GSS. The 2010 consisted of a new cross-section of 2,044 cases, the first reinterviews of the 2008 GSS respondents, and the second and final reinterviews of the 2006 GSS respondents.
three-category questions asking respondents if the reason for racial inequality between blacks and whites is the result of a) lack of motivation and b) discrimination. The response categories for these two items were “yes” or “no,” and the middle category was the “don’t know” response. This scale contains the essential content of racial resentment – perceptions as undeserving of special treatment, perceived lack of motivation, and the belief that discrimination is not a reason for racial inequality – and the average level of endorsement is similar to the Kinder and Sanders (1996) scale, (mean = .65 in 2008 GSS as compared to mean values of .61 and .62 in the 1992 and 2008 ANES respectively). However, it is important to note that this 3-item scale is less reliable $\alpha = .5$. This scale was normalized to have a 0-1 range.

**Perceived Racial Threat**

In the GSS, racial threat is inferred based on when a person was interviewed. Specifically, the time after Barack Obama secured the Democratic nomination, June 7, 2008, is treated as a period of racial threat for whites. Once Barack Obama clinched the Democratic nomination on June 7, 2008, he became the face of the Democratic Party, making the candidacy of a black man for President of the United States viable for the first time in American history. The GSS panel study provides a quasi-experimental condition in 2008. The 2008 re-interviews for this study were divided before and after Barack Obama clinched the Democratic nomination June 7, 2008, such that close to 40% of the sample – both total and white only – was interviewed after Obama became the Democratic nominee, and no systematic selection of respondents before or after this date. This random division of interviews before and after the nomination allows me to assess when Obama becomes a racial threat, the extent to which we observe differences in the relationship between racial
resentment and conservatism based on when respondents were interviewed, and if there are differences between liberal and conservative levels of perceived racial resentment based on when a person was interviewed.

**Political Ideology**

The following item measures ideological self-placement on a 1-7 scale to produce the following coding scheme: 1=very liberal, 2=liberal, 3=slightly liberal, 4=moderate, 5=slightly conservative, 6=conservative, 7=very conservative. In 2006, close to 23% of whites were at least slightly liberal, around 38% of whites were moderate, and roughly another 38% were at least slightly conservative. In 2008, approximately 23% of whites were at least slightly liberal, around 37% of whites were moderate, and nearly 40% of whites were at least slightly conservative. In 2010, roughly 27% of whites were at least slightly liberal, around 37% of whites were moderate, and close to 36% of whites were at least slightly conservative.20

**Control Variables**

I control for partisanship, which is measured by a seven-point ordinal scale from 1=strong Democrat to 7=strong Republican. I created a relative stereotype measure of the degree to which respondents rated blacks in relation to whites as lazy versus hardworking based on the response to the seven-point stereotype scale where 1 indicates that the respondent thinks blacks/whites are hardworking and 7 indicates they believe blacks/whites are lazy. I subtracted the scores from each other, and higher scores indicate higher negative African American stereotype endorsement. In 2006, the average score was .73 (SD=1.4), in 2008 the average score was .60 (SD=1.4), and in 2010, the average score was .65 (SD=1.4). Additional control variables that are added throughout the analysis include continuous

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20 Numbers do not add up to 100% because of rounding.
variables of age in years, a seven-point education variable ranging from 1=less than a high school diploma to 7=advanced post-graduate degree, and income ranging from less than $2,999.00 to over $150,000.00. Finally, dichotomous controls include being a female (code=1) and living in the South (code=1).

3.4 Data Assumptions

The models used in the empirical analysis of this dissertation make a few important assumptions that I will make explicit in this section.

*Political Ideology Is Captured by Self-Identification*

Below, I provide the correlations between ideological self-identification, individualism, and anti-egalitarianism. These correlations reveal that, given the data used in this dissertation, ideological self-identification, individualism, and anti-egalitarianism, as measured in the ANES surveys, are significantly related to each other.

Table 3.1 shows that political ideology, as measured by self-placement along the ideological scale, is positively and significantly associated with anti-egalitarianism and individualism, and this correlation is higher in 2008 than in 1992. In 1992, ideology is positively and significantly associated with individualism and anti-egalitarianism at .29 and .27 respectively. Furthermore, anti-egalitarianism and individualism are correlated with each other at .26. In 2008, all of the correlations between ideology and conservative values have increased such that individualism and anti-egalitarianism are related to each other at .43; individualism and conservatism are correlated at .42; and anti-egalitarianism and conservatism are associated at .40.

These results are congruent with the work of Thorisdottir et al (2007) and Goren (2009), which show self-identification to be a valid and reliable indicator of conservative
values. Therefore, in this dissertation, I will rely upon conservative self-identification as my measure of political ideology and assume that this measure is also capturing a general affinity for and prioritizing of the values of individualism and anti-egalitarianism.

**TABLE 3.1**

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CONSERVATISM, INDIVIDUALISM, AND ANTI-EGALITARIANISM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political Ideology (Self-Identification)</th>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Anti-Egalitarianism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1992 ANES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>N=1665</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Egalitarianism</td>
<td>0.27*</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>N=1709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=1682</td>
<td>N=1524</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2008 ANES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>N=519</td>
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<td>Anti-Egalitarianism</td>
<td>0.40*</td>
<td>0.43*</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.0000)</td>
<td>(0.0000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=1060</td>
<td>N=471</td>
<td>N=1071</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1992 and 2008 ANES Times Series Surveys. University of Michigan. (ANES, [www.electionstudies.org](http://www.electionstudies.org)). Sample is restricted to whites only, and data are weighted with robust standard errors for comparability across years. Pairwise correlations reported.

**Racial Resentment is Stable Overtime**

Consistent with the empirical work on racial attitudes, I assume that racial resentment is among the most stable of all social attitudes (Campbell et al. 1960; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Markus and Converse 1979; Kinder and Sanders 1996). This assumption is important because my theoretical argument is that perceived racial threat is influencing the
relationship between conservatism and racial resentment. By demonstrating that racial resentment is stable, it becomes less likely that endogeneity is an issue. In other words, an increase in racial resentment among conservatives or liberals is not leading to racial threat perceptions.

Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 show that the average levels of perceived racial resentment have remained relatively stable across time.

![Figure 3.1 Average Racial Resentment 1986 – 2008. Source: ANES 1986-2008 Cumulative Time Series Datafile. Not shown is the average level of racial resentment across the 2008 election, because there is no change. This stability is expected given the short time period over which these attitudes are measured.](image)
Figure 3.1 reveals that, over time, levels of racial resentment have increased such that in 2008 racial resentment was higher for conservatives and liberals than in 1986. Moreover, the gap in levels of racial resentment between liberals and conservatives was larger in 2008. However, overall these attitudes remain stable with change to the extent that it occurs, not moving outside of the standard errors of the estimates. Figure 3.2, unlike the previous figure, looks at racial resentment from 2006-2010 among the same individuals. Overall levels of perceived racial resentment among whites has displayed no change, and the gap between liberals and conservatives has remained consistent.
3.5 ANES Results

Barack Obama Represents a Racial Threat in the Minds of Whites

While only about a third of whites viewed President Obama strictly as a black person in 2009, 86% of whites believed President Obama shared at least some of the values of blacks, according to data from the Pew Racial Attitudes in America II Survey. This perceived manifest connection to African Americans has been shown to make race a powerful determinant in evaluations (Piston 2010; Tesler and Sears 2010; Lewis-Beck et al. 2010; Payne et al. 2010). Furthermore, the significance of race cannot be reduced to ideological explanations because racial considerations have been shown to affect judgments of Obama and Obama alone when compared to other similarly liberal Democrats (Piston 2010).

Given the influence of race in how Obama is judged by whites, it is possible that the anxiety whites experienced with respect to his electoral success is also racially motivated. If it is the case that Obama represents a racial threat in the minds of whites, racial considerations should significantly increase perceptions of threat. Furthermore, if the effect of such racial considerations is not reducible to ideology, the effect of such considerations for a similarly liberal white Democratic president should be indistinguishable from zero.

The most recent liberal white Democratic president before Obama is Bill Clinton. He promulgated a similarly liberal political platform and, prior to Obama, held the highest approval ratings and support among African Americans. Bill Clinton represents a political figure of comparable stature and ideological proclivities, with the key difference being that he is white. Therefore, comparing regression models of threat perceptions of Obama and

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21 Prior to Obama, Clinton was the only Democratic candidate to win since President Carter in 1976. In looking at another presidential year, I considered looking at 2000 with Gore, as well as 2004 with Kerry. The 2000 results were complicated by the fact that post-election evaluations were delayed because of the voting controversy. In 2004, political threats evoked by John Kerry are also not a function of race. However it should be noted that these results could have been partially driven by some inroads that the Republican Party made in
threat perceptions of Clinton provides one way to assess if there is a unique influence of race with respect to Obama.

Table 3.2 confirms the contention that racial considerations only influence threat perceptions of Obama, not Clinton. Table 3.2 reports the regression results for models of perceived threat related to Clinton and Obama from the 1992 and 2008 ANES surveys respectively. This table reveals that racial concerns are significant predictors of threat perceptions for Obama and not for Clinton; furthermore, ideology and partisanship also have larger effects on threat perceptions related to Obama when compared to Clinton.

A one-unit increase in political ideology in 1992 is associated with an increase in perceived threat from Clinton by .043. Holding all other variables constant, a one-unit increase in political ideology in 2008 is associated with an increase in perceived threat from Obama by .146 and by .134 when accounting for anti-Muslim sentiment. Most importantly, concerns related to black empowerment – the cornerstone of challenges to the racial status quo – are not significantly related to threat perceptions of Clinton, but do significantly increase threat perceptions of Obama. All else being equal, the effect of concerns related to

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22 The dependent variables are the 1992 ANES measure of threat experienced from Clinton and the 2008 measure of threat experienced from Obama, which were created from affective evaluations outlined in chapter three.

23 It is important to note, as mentioned in chapter three, that while the measures of concern for black empowerment are similar in content, they are not the exact same measure. For 1992, this measure is a summary measure of whether or not whites think blacks have made a lot of progress in politics and whether or not civil rights leaders are pushing too fast. For 2008, this measure is an indicator variable of whether or not whites think blacks have too much influence in politics.
TABLE 3.2
PREDICTORS OF PERCEIVED THREAT FOR CLINTON AND OBAMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived Threat from Clinton</td>
<td>Perceived Threat from Obama</td>
<td>Perceived Threat from Obama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>0.043***</td>
<td>0.146***</td>
<td>0.134***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Empowerment</td>
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<td>0.609***</td>
<td>0.592***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns</td>
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<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
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<td>-0.040</td>
<td>-0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.986)</td>
<td>(0.631)</td>
<td>(0.582)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship</td>
<td>0.140***</td>
<td>0.219***</td>
<td>0.213***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Muslim Affect</td>
<td></td>
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<td>0.262**</td>
</tr>
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<td>(0.175)</td>
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<td>(0.494)</td>
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<td>(0.988)</td>
<td>(0.777)</td>
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<td>Income</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(0.287)</td>
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<td>(0.615)</td>
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<td>South</td>
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<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.023</td>
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<td>(0.517)</td>
<td>(0.779)</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<td>-2.256***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>1566</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td>0.326</td>
<td>0.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model DF</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>83.20***</td>
<td>44.12***</td>
<td>42.77***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probs&gt;F</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1992 and 2008 ANES Time Series Study. White sample only. Data are weighted and robust standard errors are used. P-values in parentheses *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.100
black empowerment in increasing threat perceptions of Clinton are indistinguishable from zero, while having a concern over black empowerment significantly increases perceptions of threat related to Obama by .609 and by .592 when accounting for anti-Muslim sentiment. These results suggest that while Clinton and Obama may evoke threats among conservatives, the type of threat whites feel from Obama is distinct in that it contains a racial component that is not found in another similarly liberal but white Democratic president.

It might be expected that the nomination of Obama is less threatening than his election, especially for conservatives. While Obama’s nomination represents the first time an African American has ever received a national party endorsement, the contest between competing partisans for conservatives does not occur until after the primary. Furthermore, Obama’s electoral victory in November signifies the transference of presidential power to a black man and the change in the racial status quo. However, for liberals, if they experience any threat at all, the Democratic nomination might be the event to evoke such perceptions. In 2008, the Democratic primary season was especially heated once Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton emerged as the viable primary candidates seeking the presidential nomination. Having two similarly ideological candidates with the same partisanship eliminates the weight ideology and party identification can have in making such decisions, and provides a circumstance where concerns about race in virtue of the race of the candidate can become important. To the extent that this is true, I expect more conservatives to perceive threats in the election condition, and to the extent that liberals experience any threat, it should be primarily in the nomination. In addition, average levels of perceived racial threat should be higher with respect to Obama’s election than his nomination.

Turning to racial threat perceptions from the 2008 ANES data, the question wording experiment, which randomly assigns individuals to either respond to Obama’s nomination or
election, produces significant differences in levels of perceived racial threat between conservatives and liberals. First, 25% of conservatives experience some form of threat in the election versus the 18% that experience threat in the nomination. Second, the majority of liberals, 90% in the nomination and 98% in the election, do perceive a racial threat. However, it is important to note that most liberals who experience racial threat do so in the nomination.24

Liberals were equally split in terms of political awareness in terms of who did or did not perceive a racial threat from the nomination. Most liberals who perceived threat in the nomination were female and made $50,000 or less. All but one liberal person had less than a college degree. These descriptive statistics are very similar to the coalition of Hillary supporters who were white female and working class whites. Therefore, I infer that, consistent with my theoretical explanation, liberals who perceive threats are those individuals who tend to be less educated and working class whites who want to protect their privilege and are less adept at defending their political positions when put under pressure.

Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 display the average levels of perceived racial threat for all whites, as well as among liberals and conservatives. These results show that conservatives, on average, have levels of perceived racial threat greater than the total sample of whites and political liberals, the difference in average racial threat perceptions among conservatives from the overall average is larger for the election than the nomination, and the difference between liberals and conservatives levels of perceived racial threat is larger in the election than the nomination.

24 Due to the small number of liberals who perceive threats, I am unable to further analyze this group. For instance, in terms of examining whether or not these individuals are primarily Hillary supporters, there is an extreme missing data issue because over 50% of the sample did not vote in the primary.
TABLE 3.3

AVERAGE PERCEIVED RACIAL THREAT ACROSS OBAMA’S NOMINATION AND ELECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nomination Condition</th>
<th>Election Condition</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>T-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Liberals</td>
<td>-1.180</td>
<td>0.884</td>
<td>-1.639</td>
<td>0.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=260)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Conservatives</td>
<td>-0.143</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=511)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-0.588</td>
<td>1.026</td>
<td>-0.589</td>
<td>1.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=771)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2008 ANES Post-Election Survey. University of Michigan. (ANES, www.electionstudies.org). White sample only; all data are weighted; p-values in parentheses; * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

According to Table 3.3, there is no significant difference in average levels of perceived racial threat between the nomination and election for the total white sample. Political liberals experience significantly less threat in the election (M=-1.64 SD=.50) than in the nomination (M=-1.18 SD=.88). Political conservatives experience higher threat in the election (M=.05 SD=.96) than in the nomination (M=-.14 SD=.94), although this difference does not reach statistical significance.

According to Table 3.4, the difference in average levels of perceived racial threat among liberals and conservatives in the election is -1.7 and the difference with respect to the nomination is 1.04. Furthermore, liberals’ level of perceived racial threat with respect to Obama’s nomination is significantly lower than the average for all whites with respect to Obama’s nomination by .59. Likewise, the average level of perceived racial threat among liberals with respect to Obama’s election is lower than the average for all whites by 1.05.

Conservatives have higher levels of perceived racial threat in the nomination than the overall
average by .44, and higher average levels of perceived racial threat in the election than the total white sample by .638.25

### TABLE 3.4

**IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES IN PERCEIVED RACIAL THREAT ACROSS OBAMA’S NOMINATION AND ELECTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political Liberals</th>
<th>Political Conservatives</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>T-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nomination Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.037</td>
<td>-7.42***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=560)</td>
<td>Mean 1.180</td>
<td>Mean -0.143</td>
<td>SD 0.884</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.689</td>
<td>-15.49***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=535)</td>
<td>Mean -1.639</td>
<td>Mean 0.049</td>
<td>SD 0.498</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political Liberals</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>T-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nomination Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.592</td>
<td>-8.66***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=560)</td>
<td>Mean -1.180</td>
<td>Mean -0.588</td>
<td>SD 0.884</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>-15.68***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=535)</td>
<td>Mean -1.639</td>
<td>Mean -0.589</td>
<td>SD 0.498</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political Conservatives</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>T-Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nomination Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>7.302***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=560)</td>
<td>Mean -0.143</td>
<td>Mean -0.588</td>
<td>SD 0.940</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td>9.968***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=535)</td>
<td>Mean 0.049</td>
<td>Mean -0.589</td>
<td>SD 0.958</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2008 ANES Post-Election Survey. University of Michigan. ([ANES, www.electionstudies.org](http://www.electionstudies.org)). White sample only; all data are weighted; p-values in parentheses; * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001.

These results suggest that, on average, whites overall do not differ in levels of perceived racial threat from the nomination or the election. However, political conservatives are more threatened by the election and nomination than political liberals, and this difference is larger in the election. Moreover, conservatives, on average, are more threatened by Obama

---

25 It is important to note that the difference in average levels of perceived racial threat between liberals and conservatives with respect to Obama’s election is significantly greater by roughly .65.
than whites in general, and this difference is also larger for the election than the nomination. This analysis suggests that conservatives perceive racial threats to a higher degree than liberals and whites overall, and the election is perceived as more threatening than the nomination among members of this group.

To subject this initial finding to stricter empirical scrutiny, I examined the effect of Obama’s election on levels of threat using regression analysis. Table 3.5 shows that Obama’s election increases the effect of political conservatism on racial threat perceptions, even after controlling for alternative explanations such as political awareness and negative affect towards Muslims.\(^{26}\) In Table 3.5, the election increases the impact of political conservatism on racial threat perceptions by .116, all else being equal. The only other significant interaction term is between the election condition and political awareness, which has a coefficient of .350. In order to interpret the interaction between the election condition and political conservatism, I generated predicted probabilities, which are presented below. Figure 3.3 illustrates that as individuals become conservative, the level of perceived racial threat increases.\(^{27}\)

However, even at the most extreme conservative category, threat is never distinguishable from zero, which is to say that whites do not experience more anxiety than enthusiasm under this set of conditions. Levels of perceived racial threat exceed zero only with respect to those whites who were asked about Obama’s election.

\(^{26}\) No sociodemographic controls were added here because the assignment to the nomination versus election question was random, thereby serving as an experimental manipulation. Any sociodemographic differences were due to random chance. I did not add a control for partisanship or vote choice for McCain because of extreme collinearity with political conservatism.

\(^{27}\) Linear predictions were obtained by calculating the slope at different values of ideology, setting the election variable to 1=democratic nomination treatment and to 2=election treatment. All other variables in the model were held to their observed values in the data, and the result was averaged for each person across the entire sample.
TABLE 3.5

ELECTION INCREASES EFFECT OF CONSERVATISM ON LEVELS OF PERCEIVED RACIAL THREAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Racial Threat Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Election Condition</td>
<td>0.948***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>0.207***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Empowerment Concerns</td>
<td>0.840***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>-0.196†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.081)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Muslim Affect</td>
<td>0.227†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.055)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election*Political Ideology</td>
<td>0.116**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election*Black Empowerment Concerns</td>
<td>-0.343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.239)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election*Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.350*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election*Anti-Muslim Affect</td>
<td>0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.501)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.857***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sub-Population N 1065
R² 0.278
DF_M 9
F 51.39***
Prob>F (0.000)

Source: 2008 ANES Time Series Study. White sample only. Data are weighted and robust standard errors are used. P-values in parentheses *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.1
In this instance, Figure 3.3 shows that, with respect to the election condition, being conservative and extremely conservative increases the linear prediction of perceiving racial threat above and beyond any enthusiasm whites felt for Obama.

Table 3.5 also revealed that the variable for concerns related to black empowerment has an independent and statistically significant effect on perceptions of racial threat. Specifically, holding all other variables constant, if whites perceive that blacks have too much influence in American politics, perceived racial threat increases by .84. I also generated predicted probabilities, which manipulated whether or not someone perceived that blacks have too much political influence in the nomination and election condition across different levels of political conservatism.
Figure 3.4 shows that perceiving that blacks have too much influence in politics increases the effect of ideology with respect to both Obama’s nomination and election. With respect to Obama’s nomination, perceiving that blacks have too much influence in politics increases the effect of political conservatism, such that perceived racial threat becomes greater than zero among conservatives. With respect to Obama’s election perceiving that blacks have too much influence in politics increases the effect of political conservatism, such that perceived racial threat is experienced among not just the conservative and extremely conservative, but also those individuals who identify as leaning conservative and slightly conservative. In other words, this analysis shows across both the nomination and election, racial concerns are magnifying threat perceptions. Together these findings provide empirical support for the contention that Obama evokes racial threat perceptions, which are more likely experienced by political conservatives than political liberals, especially with respect to Obama’s election.
Racial Threat Perceptions and the Impact of Ideology on Racial Resentment

In this section, I examine the extent to which racial threat perceptions stemming from the nomination versus the election in 2008, as measured by the 2008 ANES affective evaluations, conditions the impact of political ideology on racial resentment. The regression results presented in Table 3.5 provide a formal test of the first component of my proposed model.\footnote{Excluded from these models is a control variable for the race of the interviewer. When included in the model, there is no significant effect of the race of the interviewer, and the results do not drastically change. Therefore, this variable was excluded. In addition, notably absent are measures of individualism and anti-egalitarianism. In previous analysis, once controls for individualism and anti-egalitarianism were added to the OLS models, political conservatism had no statistically significant effect, which makes sense considering that I assume that political conservatism captures the substantive content of both of these variables. Given my}
Table 3.6 shows that political ideology in the absence of racial threat is an extremely significant correlate of racial resentment. A one-unit increase in political ideology increases racial resentment by .102 at a p-value equal to 0.001. However, once racial threat perceptions and the interaction between racial threat and ideology are taken into account, the size and significance of the coefficient for political ideology is reduced. In the full sample with racial threat perceptions, a one-unit increase in political ideology increases a white person’s level of racial resentment by .048 at the 95% significance level. In both of the restricted samples, the coefficient for political ideology is reduced to marginal significance with a coefficient of .043 and .059 in the nomination and election sample respectively.

When racial threat perceptions are included in models of racial resentment, this variable has both independent and conditional effects as predicted by my proposed model. A one unit increase in racial threat perceptions leads to an increase in racial resentment by roughly .41 in the full sample, .45 in the sample with those whites who were asked about Obama’s nomination, and .38 in the sample with whites that were asked about Obama’s election.

Table 3.6 shows that the impact of political ideology on racial resentment is conditional upon racial threat. The coefficient of the interaction between ideology and racial resentment is -0.039 in the full sample, -0.042 in the nomination sample, and -0.038 in the sample. In order to interpret the interactions, I obtained the linear predictions for each sample by computing predicted scores for those who identify as conservative and those who identify as liberal, for values above a score of zero for racial threat perceptions, while all other variables are held to their observed value in the data and averaged across all individuals in the sample.

theoretical model, these variables are excluded and I proceed under the assumption that conservative self-identification is capture endorsement and prioritizing of individualism and anti-egalitarianism.
### TABLE 3.6

RACIAL THREAT PERCEPTIONS INCREASE THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL CONSERVATISM ON RACIAL RESENTMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conservatism Only</th>
<th>Racial Threat (Full Sample)</th>
<th>Racial Threat (Nomination Only)</th>
<th>Racial Threat (Election Only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Threat Perceptions</strong></td>
<td>0.413***</td>
<td>0.446***</td>
<td>0.375**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Ideology</strong></td>
<td>0.102***</td>
<td>0.048*</td>
<td>0.043†</td>
<td>0.059†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.073)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em><em>Racial Threat</em> Ideology</em>*</td>
<td>-0.039***</td>
<td>-0.042**</td>
<td>-0.038*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.049)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anti-Black Affect</strong></td>
<td>0.005**</td>
<td>0.004*</td>
<td>0.005*</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td>(0.372)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative Black Stereotype</strong></td>
<td>0.196***</td>
<td>0.166***</td>
<td>0.160***</td>
<td>0.175***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partisanship</strong></td>
<td>0.056***</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.344)</td>
<td>(0.342)</td>
<td>(0.591)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Awareness</strong></td>
<td>-0.026</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.349)</td>
<td>(0.819)</td>
<td>(0.137)</td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>-0.004†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.387)</td>
<td>(0.564)</td>
<td>(0.435)</td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>-0.099***</td>
<td>-0.095***</td>
<td>-0.052†</td>
<td>-0.136***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.294)</td>
<td>(0.369)</td>
<td>(0.961)</td>
<td>(0.240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South</strong></td>
<td>0.273***</td>
<td>0.257***</td>
<td>0.198**</td>
<td>0.326***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td>0.011*</td>
<td>0.009†</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.016*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
<td>(0.674)</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant</strong></td>
<td>2.894***</td>
<td>3.467***</td>
<td>3.436***</td>
<td>3.399***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Source: 2008 AES Time Series Study. White sample only. Data are weighted and robust standard errors are used. P-values in parentheses *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10 |
Figure 3.5 shows that the slopes for political conservatives are relatively flat for each sample whereas the slopes for political liberals are steeper. This means that the effect of racial threat on levels of racial resentment is more pronounced for liberals than for conservatives. In fact, at the highest level of threat across each condition, liberal and conservative predictive margins do not differ significantly from each other. In the full sample, regardless of whether threat is from the nomination or election, liberals who are not perceiving a racial threat over and above the enthusiasm they feel for Obama are predicted to score, on average, a 3.58 on the racial resentment scale. This predicted score increases as perceptions of racial threat increase such that, at the highest level of perceived racial threat, a politically liberal person is predicted to score an average of 4.25 on the racial resentment scale. This essentially moves a politically liberal person into the next racially resentful category.

Conservatives with a perceived racial threat level equal to zero are predicted, on average, to score a 3.86 on the racial resentment scale, and this prediction only slightly increases to 4.06 at the highest level of perceived threat overall. In essence, while the starting point of political conservatives is higher than for political liberals, the pronounced effect of threat on political liberals makes indistinguishable from conservatives as levels of threat increase.

In the nomination and election samples, liberals and conservatives become indistinguishable when levels of perceived racial threat are zero. Liberals in the nomination condition with a perceived racial threat score of zero are predicted, on average, to score roughly a 3.6, and liberals in the election condition with the same perceived racial threat score.
Figure 3.5: Perceived Racial Threat Moderates the Relationship Between Ideology and Racial Resentment
score are expected to score, on average, a 3.53 on the racial resentment scale. These predictions increase linearly as racial threat perceptions increase such that, at the highest level of perceived threat, liberals are predicted to score, on average, roughly a 4.32 and 4.12 in the nomination and election conditions respectively.

For conservatives, there are very small effects in both the nomination and election condition. When levels of perceived threat are zero, conservatives, on average, are predicted to score 3.85 and 3.89 on the racial resentment scale in the nomination and election conditions respectively. If a conservative person perceives a racial threat to the highest degree, on average the linear prediction for this person is 4.12 in the nomination and 4.02 in the election.

3.6 GSS Results

Having established that the Obama in the 2008 election evoked a perceived racial threat which moderated the relationship between racial resentment and political ideology, the results of the GSS are presented here to supplement and bolster the above analysis. The above evidence supports the claim that Barack Obama signifies a racial threat for whites even as early as his nomination. Therefore, the time after Obama’s nomination provides a context of threat, which should also modify the relationship between ideology and racial resentment.

In examining the GSS Panel data, Table 3.7 reveals a significant effect of the interaction between being interviewed after Obama’s nomination and being politically conservative as opposed to liberal on levels of racial resentment. All else being equal, being interviewed after Obama’s nomination increases the effect of being conservative as opposed
to liberal by .111 for racial resentment.\textsuperscript{30} I calculated the linear predictions across ideological groups both prior to and after Obama’s nomination and determined if differences in levels of racial resentment were statistically significant.\textsuperscript{31} Figure 3.6 graphically illustrates these results.

### TABLE 3.7

**IMPACT OF NOMINATION ON RACIAL RESENTMENT ACROSS IDEOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Racial Resentment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post Nomination</td>
<td>-0.088†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.070)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Moderate</td>
<td>0.125***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Conservatism</td>
<td>0.163***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomination*Moderate</td>
<td>0.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomination*Conservatism</td>
<td>0.111*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.675***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                                |                             |
| Sample Size                    | 735                         |
| R\textsuperscript{2}           | 0.13                        |
| Model DF                       | 5                           |
| F                              | 13.2***                     |
| Prob>F                         | (0.000)                     |

Source: GSS 2008 Panel Survey. White sample only. Data are weighted and robust standard errors are used. P-values in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.1.

\textsuperscript{30} There were large differences in ideological self-identification as compared to the ANES and CCAP measures, and this variable was not multivariate normal. Therefore, I created dummy variables for liberal, moderate, and conservative. I chose to make liberals the reference category in order to provide a comparison of the coefficient for conservatives to the liberal baseline.

\textsuperscript{31} Linear predictions were obtained by calculating the slope when liberal=1 and conservative =1 across pre- and post-nomination conditions. All other variables in the model were held to their observed values in the data, and the result was averaged for each person across the entire sample.
Figure 3.6 shows the size of the linear prediction for racial resentment and the difference in the linear prediction for conservatives and liberals pre- and post-nomination. Prior to Obama securing the Democratic nomination, the average liberal white person would be predicted to score roughly a .67 on a 0-1 scale of racially resentful attitudes. This predictive margin decreases to roughly .59 after Obama secures the nomination. Before Obama became the Democratic nominee, white conservatives were predicted, on average, to score a .84 on the Kinder and Kam (2009) racial resentment scale. This margin increases only slightly to .86. The difference between conservatives and liberals prior to Obama becoming the Democratic nominee was approximately .17. However, the difference between conservatives and liberals after Obama’s success in the primary season was .28.

In addition, this graph shows that the differences between liberals before and after Obama clinched the nomination are not statistically different from each other. Furthermore, the difference between liberals and conservatives in the pre-nomination condition is not statistically significant. However, the difference between political liberals and conservatives is larger after Obama secures the Democratic nomination and is statistically significant. Furthermore, the difference between conservatives pre- and post- Obama’s nomination is statistically significant with conservatives being more racially resentful after Obama is nominated by the Democratic Party. Taken together, the data from the GSS support the analysis in the ANES. Liberals have higher racial resentment during the months leading up to the nomination, when the primaries were most contested and when most liberals perceived a racial threat. Conservatives have higher racial resentment during months after the nomination, when Obama the notion of a black president becomes tangible.
Figure 3.6: Impact of Racial Threat on Racial Resentment Across Ideological Group
3.6 Conclusion

These results support my central contention that racial threat perceptions moderate the relationship between ideology and racial resentment. Obama represents a racial threat in the minds of some whites, and these whites tend to be politically conservative. Furthermore, politically conservative whites, to the extent that they do perceive racial threats, do so to a higher degree than liberals, especially in the election. The time leading up to Obama’s nomination is associated with higher levels of racial resentment for liberals, and the period of racial threat after Obama’s nomination significantly increased levels of racial resentment for conservatives. Perceived racial threat moderates the relationship between racial resentment and ideology with respect to Obama’s nomination and elections. For conservatives, levels of racial resentment remain high across all conditions; for liberals, levels of racial resentment become drastically larger.
CHAPTER FOUR:
A NEW NORMAL? THE POLICY CONSEQUENCES OF RACIAL THREAT AND
THE OVERLAP BETWEEN RACIAL RESENTMENT AND CONSERVATISM

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four provides a direct test of the policy consequences of racial threat perceptions. While one of the few aspects of racial resentment that is not contested is its predictive power, whether or not the strength of this relationship depends upon the level of racial threat someone perceives is an open question. I begin Chapter four with a description of the data and measures from the 2008 ANES and 2006-2010 GSS Panel datasets. I also introduce the CCAP Panel data and describe the measures used in this dataset. These data are used to test the extent to which racial threat perceptions independently increase opposition to racial policy preferences and moderate the effect of racial resentment and conservatism in whites' attitudes towards such policies.

The analysis in Chapter four proceeds by first using the 2008 ANES to descriptively show that whites’ opinions against affirmative action are strongest among those racially resentful conservatives who perceive a racial threat. Next, I report the results of ordered logistic regression models of affirmative action as a function of the interaction between racial resentment and conservatism for the total white sample, those whites who do not perceive a racial threat, and those whites who do perceive a racial threat are constructed. These models reveal that racial threat perceptions increase the probability of opposing affirmative action
and condition the effect of racial resentment and political ideology on opposition to affirmative action.

Turning to attitudes related to healthcare reform, I begin by using the 2006-2010 GSS Panel to show that opposition to government expansion into healthcare increases sharply after 2008 among racially resentful conservatives. Then, using a survey experiment embedded in the November 2009 panel of the 2007-2009 CCAP Panel Study, I present descriptive findings that reveal that, on average, the highest opposition to healthcare reform, regardless of how a policy is framed, is among those whites who perceived a racial threat immediately after Obama’s election.

Finally, I present the results of regression models of healthcare reform attitudes as a function of whether respondents were assigned to the Obama, Clinton, or neutral frame of healthcare reform and the interaction between this treatment variable with political ideology and racial resentment for the total white sample, those white who did not perceive racial threats, and those whites who did not perceive racial threats. This analysis shows that the influence of racial resentment and conservatism on opposition to healthcare reform, especially healthcare reform framed as Obama’s policy, is strongest among those whites who perceived a racial threat after Obama was elected. I conclude chapter four with a summary of findings.

---

32 I performed a randomization check, which revealed no systematic differences in assignment to any of the conditions in the survey experiment. It is important to note that two regression models will be presented. The first model provides an analysis when the base category of the treatment variable is the neutral condition, and the second model provides an analysis when the base category is the Clinton condition. Providing two models will show that framing healthcare as Obama’s policy makes racial resentment a significant predictor of healthcare reform as compared to a neutral or Clinton framing of healthcare reform.
4.2 2008 ANES Data and Measures

Data

The analysis in chapter four will use the 2008 ANES Post-Election survey described in chapter three.

Measures

The measurement of racial resentment and political ideology are exactly the same as in chapter three. I also use the same measure of perceived racial threat; however, I dichotomize the variable such that a code=1 indicates that a respondent scored above a zero on the perceived racial threat variable and experiences anxiety over and above any enthusiasms they may have felt. The control variables used in the analysis of racial policy preferences are political awareness, partisanship, age, education, being a female, residing in the South, and income. These variables are also measured the same way as in chapter three. The only new variable in the analysis in this chapter is the measure of affirmative action policy preferences.

Affirmative Action Policy Preferences

To measure opposition to affirmative action, I created a five-category variable from the following question:

What about your opinion -- are you FOR or AGAINST preferential hiring and promotion of blacks? IF R IS FOR PREFERENTIAL HIRING AND PROMOTION FOR BLACKS: Do you favor preference in hiring and promotion STRONGLY or NOT STRONGLY? IF R IS AGAINST PREFERENTIAL HIRING AND PROMOTION FOR BLACKS: Do you oppose preference in hiring and promotion STRONGLY or NOT STRONGLY?

The coding scheme for this variable is as follows: 1=strongly for affirmative action, 2=not strongly for affirmative action, 3=don’t know or other opinion, 4=not strongly opposed to affirmative action, and 5=strongly opposed to affirmative action. Roughly 10%
of whites either strongly or not strongly support affirmative action, and about 6% of whites don’t know or have some other opinion. An overwhelming majority of whites are unsupportive of affirmative action, with close to 20% of whites opposing affirmative action, but not strongly, and 65% of whites strongly opposing this policy.

4.3 2006 – 2010 GSS Data and Measures

Data

The analysis in chapter four will use the same 2006-2010 GSS Panel data described in chapter three.

Measures

The analysis in chapter four will use the exact same measures of racial resentment and political ideology described in chapter three. The only new measure from this dataset is the measure of healthcare attitudes.

Healthcare Attitudes

For descriptive purposes, I will use a measure of whites’ preferences for the role of government with respect to healthcare in 2006-2010. Half of the sample in each year was asked the following question:

In general, some people think that it is the responsibility of the government in Washington to see to it that people have help in paying for doctors and hospital bills; they are at point 1. Others think that these matters are not the responsibility of the federal government and that people should take care of these things themselves; they are at point 5. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you made up your mind on this?

Respondents placed themselves on a 1-5 scale with a mean\(\approx 2.45\) SD\(\approx 1.20\) in 2006, a mean\(\approx 2.50\) SD\(\approx 1.22\) in 2008, and a mean\(\approx 2.86\) SD\(\approx 1.30\) in 2010.
4.4 2007-2009 UCLA CCAP Panel Data and Measures

Data

The 2007-2009 UCLA Cooperative Campaign Analysis Project (CCAP) Panel Study was fielded by YouGov America/Polimetrix. The CCAP project involved twenty-seven research institutions – including the University of California-Los Angeles – in the creation of a new resource to study presidential campaigns. This dataset originally consisted of a six-wave panel study representative of registered voters and stratified by battleground or non-battleground states. In order to obtain this sample, the CCAP utilized a matching algorithm to produce an Internet sample that closely approximates the demographic makeup of a random sample carried out in the American Community Study (Jackman and Vavreck 2009).\(^3\) Given that this is a cooperative study, a portion of all 18,250 matched interviews conducted after the baseline wave was reserved for unique data collection designed by participating teams. The UCLA portion of the study used for analysis in this work consisted of 3,147 respondents. The CCAP conducted a baseline survey in December of 2007, and subsequent panel waves took place in January, March, September, October, and November of 2008, as well as in November of 2009.\(^4\) The sample is roughly 52% female and 48% male. Of those reporting their rates, there are 2,433 whites.\(^5\)

---

\(^3\) The limitations of this panel dataset are that I can only generalize to registered voters, and there will inevitably involve some degree of self-selection bias in virtue of Polimetrix’s sampling procedure. However, in recent analysis using CCAP data, results of the CCAP are comparable to ANES 2008 survey results (Tesler and Sears 2010).

\(^4\) The within panel response rate (off of completed baseline interviews) for the matched sample is 82%, 88%, 84%, 76%, and 87% in each respective wave.

\(^5\) All of the analyses are weighted to the general population to foster comparability between different sampling designs.
Measures

Survey Experiment: Healthcare Reform Policy Preferences

I use a survey experiment from the UCLA CCAP to disentangle the effect of racial resentment and conservative opposition to the public option and universal healthcare coverage. These two policy initiatives were widely debated in politics and represent the most controversial aspects of healthcare reform, making attitudes related to these matters well crystallized in the public (Tesler 2012). In the CCAP, respondents from the November 2009 CCAP re-interviews were randomly assigned to four different survey questionnaires. In three survey forms, the framing of health care reform was manipulated to test the extent to which racial resentment influences attitudes about healthcare reform framed as Obama’s policy as opposed to Clinton’s or a neutral policy framing. Below is the exact framing for each condition:

Neutral Condition:

*We would like to get your opinion about two current health care proposals being debated. As you may know, some people have proposed a plan that would guarantee health insurance for all Americans. What do you think? Do you Favor or Oppose the federal government guaranteeing health insurance for all Americans? Many of these same people have also proposed a government-administered health insurance plan, often called the “public option”, to compete with private insurance. What do you think? Do you Favor or Oppose a government-administered health insurance option?*

Clinton Condition:

*We would like to get your opinion about two health care plans previously proposed by President Bill Clinton in 1993 that are still being debated today. As you may recall, President Clinton proposed a plan that would have guaranteed health insurance for all Americans. What do you think? Do you Favor or Oppose the federal government guaranteeing health insurance for all Americans? President Clinton also proposed a government-administered health insurance plan, often called the “public option”, to compete with private insurance. What do you think? Do you Favor or Oppose a government-administered health insurance option?*

Obama Condition:
We would like to get your opinion about two of President Barack Obama’s current health care proposals. As you may know, President Obama proposed a plan that would guarantee health insurance for all Americans. What do you think? Do you Favor or Oppose the federal government guaranteeing health insurance for all Americans? President Obama also proposed a government-administered health insurance plan, often called the “public option”, to compete with private insurance. What do you think? Do you Favor or Oppose a government-administered health insurance option?

Then, I created a categorical variable for universal healthcare as follows: 1=strongly favor universal healthcare, 2=favor universal healthcare but not strongly, 3= oppose universal healthcare but not strongly, and 4=strongly oppose universal healthcare. Similarly, I created a categorical variable for a public option as follows: 1= strongly favor public option, 2= favor public option but not strongly, 3=oppose public option but not strongly, and 4= strongly oppose public option. I combined these items to form a summary measure of healthcare reform ($\alpha=.97$). This variable was a seven-point index with a minimum value of 1 and a maximum value of 4, with increasing 0.5 increments. Across the total white sample, the average score for healthcare opposition was 2.67 (SD=1.30). Among all whites, a little over the majority (≈52%) were above average in opposing healthcare reform. those subjects who received the neutral frame, roughly 54% were opposed to healthcare reform; in the Clinton frame, close to 48% were above average in terms of opposition to healthcare; and in the Obama frame, approximately 54% of white respondents were more opposed to healthcare reform than the average of the full sample.

Racial Resentment

The CCAP contains the four-item Kinder and Sanders (1996) racial resentment scale previously discussed above in the section describing the ANES data. The four-item scale has an alpha coefficient equal to .88 in the November 2011 wave.
Perceived Racial Threat

In the CCAP study, racial threat is assessed by whether or not people believe that President Obama’s election will make race relations worse. The perception that Obama’s election signals a deterioration of existing race relations in American society is the cornerstone of racial threat perceptions. In the CCAP Panel, the November wave of the study immediately after the election asked respondents if, because of President Obama’s victory, race relations would quickly improve, slowly improve, stay the same, slowly get worse, or quickly get worse. Roughly 22% of white registered voters felt that race relations would either slowly or quickly get worse. Therefore, I created a 0-1 indicator variable such that a code=1 signifies that a person believes Obama’s election will make race relations worse and is thus indicative of racial threat.

Political Conservatism

In the UCLA CCAP Study, self-placement along the ideological spectrum was measured by where respondents placed themselves on a five-category scale. This scale was scored such that 1=very liberal, 2=liberal, 3=moderate, 4=conservative, and 5=very conservative. In the March 2008 wave of this study, approximately 27% of whites were at least liberal, about 28% were moderate, and around 44% of whites were at least conservative. In the September 2008 wave of this study, around 26% of whites were at least liberal, nearly 28% were moderate, and roughly 46% of whites were at least conservative. In the October 2008 wave of this study, about 25% of whites were at least liberal, approximately 30% were moderate, and nearly 45% of whites were at least conservative. In the November 2009 wave
of this study, roughly 26% of whites were at least liberal, about 28% were moderate, and approximately 47% of whites were at least conservative.\textsuperscript{36}

Control Variables

I created relative stereotype endorsement measures for both waves from respondents’ ratings of blacks and whites as hardworking to lazy and intelligent to unintelligent on 1 to 7 scales. In the September 2008 wave, the average score for this measure was .73 (SD=1.3), and in the November 2009 wave, the average score for this measure was .56 (SD=1.2). Partisanship is measured by the standard seven-category scale that measures a person’s party identification ranging from 1=strong Democrat to 7=strong Republican. Political interest is measured across all waves with the following variable by the level of interest in politics and current events, which range from 1=very much to 2=somewhat to 3=not that much. I additionally add controls for age in years; education, which is a seven category variable that ranges from 1= less than high school diploma to 7=advanced post-graduate degree’ household income, ranging from less than $2,999.00 to over $150,000.00; being a female (code=1); and living in the South (code=1).

4.5 ANES Results

As some whites cope with the perceived loss of the existing racial hierarchy brought on by the election of the first black president, the willingness to accept the view that racial discrimination still persists has declined and opposition to racial policies, such as affirmative action, has increased. Table 4.1 shows that whites were generally unsupportive of affirmative action, in the form of preferential treatment for blacks in hiring and promotion, immediately after the 2008 election. In the full white sample in the 2008 ANES Survey, roughly 45% of

\textsuperscript{36} Numbers do not add up to 100% because of rounding.
white liberals strongly oppose affirmative action; nearly 70% of conservatives strongly oppose affirmative action; approximately 44% of whites that have low racial resentment strongly oppose affirmative action; and 80% of whites with high racial resentment strongly oppose affirmative action.

Table 4.1 also reveals that those whites who perceive racial threats also oppose affirmative action at higher rates across ideological and racially resentful categories. For instance, close to 70% of liberals who do not perceive racial threats oppose or strongly oppose affirmative action, and this number increases such that all liberals who perceive racial threats oppose or strongly oppose affirmative action.\textsuperscript{37} Likewise, roughly 88% of conservatives who do not perceive a racial threat oppose or strongly oppose affirmative action, and among conservatives who perceive a racial threat, roughly 84% strongly oppose affirmative action. Roughly 44% of whites with low racial resentment who do not perceive racial threats strongly oppose affirmative action, and approximately 71% of whites that perceive racial threats with low racial resentment strongly oppose affirmative action. While 80% of whites with high racial resentment strongly oppose affirmative action even if they do not perceive a racial threat, nearly 95% strongly oppose affirmative action among those highly racially resentful individuals who do perceive a racial threat.

These findings suggest that racial threat perceptions increase opposition to affirmative action and strengthen the influence of ideology and racial resentment in opposition to affirmative action. I tested the extent to which this claim holds in ordered logistic regression models controlling for partisanship, political awareness, and sociodemographic controls.

\textsuperscript{37} It is important to note that while all liberals who perceive racial threats oppose affirmative action, only a very small number of liberals perceive racial threats. The small N in the liberal cells is also a reflection of missing data, which did not appear to be systematic, on the affirmative action question.
TABLE 4.1
OPPOSITION TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STRONGEST AMONG THOSE WHO PERCEIVE RACIAL THREAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Sample</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Favor</td>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>Neither Favor nor Oppose</td>
<td>Oppose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>Row %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal (N=10)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative (N=155)</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=165)</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Resentment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Resentiment (N=56)</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Resentiment (N=147)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=203)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Whites Who Do Not Perceive Racial Threats</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Favor</td>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>Neither Favor nor Oppose</td>
<td>Oppose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>Row %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal (N=247)</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative (N=349)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=596)</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Resentment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Resentiment (N=482)</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<td>11.0</td>
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<td>High Resentiment (N=390)</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>13.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total (N=872)</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Whites Who Perceive Racial Threats</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Favor</td>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>Neither Favor nor Oppose</td>
<td>Oppose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>Row %</td>
<td>Row %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal (N=10)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative (N=155)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=165)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Resentment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Resentiment (N=56)</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Resentiment (N=147)</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=203)</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2008 ANES Time Series Survey. White sample only. Data are weighted. Racial resentment has been collapsed such that scores at the mean and above are considered ‘high resentment’ and scores below the mean are considered ‘low resentment.’ The moderate ideological group is not presented here, and liberals are those respondents who at least lean liberal, while conservatives are those respondents that at least lean conservative.
Table 4.2 reports the results of these models, and reveals that perceived racial threat, racial resentment, and political ideology are significant predictors of opposing affirmative action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>No Perceived Racial Threat</th>
<th>Perceived Racial Threat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>1.662***</td>
<td>1.592***</td>
<td>2.662***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Ideology</td>
<td>0.404***</td>
<td>0.382**</td>
<td>0.807*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.098)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment*Political Ideology</td>
<td>0.114***</td>
<td>-0.106**</td>
<td>-0.275**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.039)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisanship</td>
<td>0.153**</td>
<td>0.133*</td>
<td>0.176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.056)</td>
<td>(0.245)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Awareness</td>
<td>0.253***</td>
<td>0.204**</td>
<td>0.628**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.239)</td>
<td>(0.228)</td>
<td>(0.510)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>0.237***</td>
<td>0.345**</td>
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<td>(0.001)</td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td>0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.827)</td>
<td>(0.663)</td>
<td>(0.882)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.037</td>
<td>-0.099</td>
<td>0.493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.825)</td>
<td>(0.582)</td>
<td>(0.274)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>-0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.703)</td>
<td>(0.410)</td>
<td>(0.259)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Cutpoint 1                     | 4.598***     | 4.339***                  | 7.218**                 |
|                                | (0.000)      | (0.000)                   | (0.036)                 |
| Cutpoint 2                     | 5.596***     | 5.325***                  | 8.423**                 |
|                                | (0.000)      | (0.000)                   | (0.016)                 |
| Cutpoint 3                     | 6.278***     | 5.970***                  | 9.494**                 |
|                                | (0.000)      | (0.000)                   | (0.005)                 |
| Cutpoint 4                     | 7.638***     | 7.355***                  | 10.703**                |
|                                | (0.000)      | (0.000)                   | (0.001)                 |

Sample Size: 975
Model_DF: 10
F: 22.33***
Prob>P: 4.580***

Source: 2008 ANES Time Series Study. White sample only, data are weighted and robust standard errors are used. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10.
In the first model, in which the measure of perceived racial threat is excluded, racial resentment and conservatism have both independent and conditional effects on opposing affirmative action. If the effect of ideology were zero, a one-unit increase in racial resentment increases the log odds of being in the higher category of opposing affirmative action by 1.662. Likewise, when the effect of racial resentment is zero, a one-unit increase in conservatism increases the log odds of being in a higher affirmative action opposition category by .404. The negative effect of the odds for the interaction between conservatism and racial resentment is .114.

In the second model, among those whites who do not perceive threats, racial resentment, conservatism, and the interaction between these two variables remain statistically significant, although the size of the coefficients decrease. Assuming no effect of ideology, the log odds of being more highly opposed to affirmative action is 1.592 times higher with a one-unit increase in racial resentment. Assuming no effect of racial resentment, all else being equal, a one-unit increase in ideology increases the log odds of being more strongly opposed to affirmative action by .382. The effect of the log odds for the interaction between racial resentment and ideology is -.106.

Among whites who perceive a racial threat, the significant coefficients of racial resentment, political ideology, and the interaction between these two variables are the largest. The independent effect of racial resentment is such that a one-unit increase in racial resentment increases the log odds of being in the higher category of opposing affirmative action by 2.662. Assuming no effect of racial resentment, a one-unit increase in political ideology increases the log odds of being in a more strongly opposed affirmative action category by .807. Finally, the interaction between racial resentment and political ideology is .275.
In order to interpret the interaction terms, I calculated the predicted probabilities of strongly opposing affirmative action for liberals and conservatives in each model.38

Figure 4.1 provides a graphical representation of the predicted probability of strongly opposing affirmative action for the total white sample, among those whites who do not perceive threats, and among those whites who do perceive threats. In the total white sample and among those whites who do not perceive racial threats, there is a substantial increase in the probability of strongly opposing affirmative for liberals and conservatives as racial resentment increases. However, the slope for conservatives who perceive a racial threat is relatively flat, while the slope for political liberals is steep.

Specifically, in all three models, liberals with low racial resentment have just over a 5% chance of strongly opposing affirmative action. In the full sample of whites and the sample of non-threatened whites, moving to a moderate level of racial resentment increases the probability of being strongly opposed to affirmative action for liberals to roughly 50%; at the highest level of racial resentment, the predicted probability of being strongly opposed to affirmative action among liberals is about 90%. For liberals who perceive a racial threat at a moderate level of racial resentment, the probability increases by over 20 percentage points to about 74%, and jumps to 99% at the highest level of racial threat. Furthermore, the confidence interval for the most highly racially resentful political liberals who experience racial threat is very small, which means that this estimate is the most accurate of all predicted probabilities across all the models.

For conservatives, there are relatively large differences at lower levels of racial resentment, but across all three models, at the highest level of racial resentment,

---

38 In calculating predicted probabilities, for each sample I set ideology = 2 for those who identify as liberal and 8 = those who identify as conservative. I allowed racial resentment to vary by the min, median, and max value while holding all other variables in the model at their observed value and then averaging across responses.
Figure 4.1. Perceived Racial Threat Increases Affirmative Action Opposition for Liberals
conservatives have about an 85% predicted probability of strongly opposing affirmative action. Conservatives who have relatively low racial resentment in the total and non-threatened samples only have a 27% and 25% probability of strongly opposing affirmative action, respectively. However, if conservatives perceive racial threats at low racial resentment levels, the probability of strongly opposing affirmative action is 54%. Conservatives in the total sample and sample of non-racially threatened whites with moderate levels of racial resentment are roughly 60% more likely to be strongly opposed to affirmative action. Conservatives who perceive a racial threat with moderate levels of racial resentment have about a 70% chance of strongly opposing affirmative action.

Based on these findings, perceived racial threat makes conservatives and liberals look similar, and at times liberals act more conservative than conservatives. For instance, the overlapping confidence intervals at higher levels of racial resentment make liberals and conservatives statistically indistinguishable from each other.

4.6 GSS Results

The analysis above empirically demonstrates that racial threat influences explicitly racial policy preferences as expected. However, in examining attitudes toward healthcare over time among the same white respondents using the GSS 2006-2010 Panel, Figure 4.2 shows that while, on average, whites’ attitudes with respect to opposing government spending on healthcare and individuals being responsible for covering their own healthcare costs have been stable, healthcare opposition has increased among racially resentful conservatives.39

39 I dichotomized indicators for conservatives and liberals such that an individual who identified as at least leaning liberal was classified as liberal, and a person who identified as at least leaning conservative was classified
This graph shows that, for whites, average healthcare opposition among liberals, regardless of whether or not they were racially resentful, as well as among conservatives who were not racially resentful, have remained stable. Non-racially resentful conservatives are not statistically distinguishable from non-racially resentful liberals, racially resentful liberals, or racially resentful conservatives from 2006-2010. Racially resentful conservatives, on the other hand, have the highest average level of opposition to healthcare, which significantly increased after 2008. Racially resentful conservatives, on average, are the most opposed to government guaranteeing health coverage for all citizens, although in 2006 and 2008 racially resentful and non-racially resentful conservatives do not statistically differ from each other. After 2008, for racially resentful conservatives, the average opposition to government guaranteeing healthcare to all citizens rose from roughly 2.8 to 3.4. This opposition among racially resentful conservatives was higher than the average for non-racially resentful conservatives by .17, higher than the average for racially resentful liberals by .13, and higher than the average for non-racially resentful liberals by .19.

As conservative. In order to create the racially resentful indicator a score above the mean was given a code of 1, and others were coded as 0.
4.7 UCLA CCAP Results

However, these findings are only part of the story. Table 4.3 reports average healthcare reform based on the combined average opposition to a public option and universal healthcare coverage among all whites, those whites who did not perceive a racial threat from Obama right after his election, and those whites who did perceive such threats in the November 2009 wave of the UCLA CCAP Panel Study.\footnote{The measure of racial threat in the analysis using the CCAP data is the dichotomous variable that gives respondents a code=1 if they perceived Obama’s election as leading to a worsening of race relations in America in the post-election wave of the study as discussed in chapter three.}
Table 4.3 shows that, on average, individuals who perceive racial threat are more highly opposed to healthcare reform, regardless of how it is framed, than whites overall and those whites who do not perceive racial threats across ideological and racially resentful categories. In addition, conservatives and highly racially resentful individuals in all three frames of healthcare reform, on average, are the most opposed to healthcare reform. Among those conservatives who do not perceive racial threats, the average healthcare reform opposition score is 3.58 in the neutral condition, 3.54 in the Clinton condition, and 3.54 in the Obama condition.

Among those whites with high racial resentment who do not perceive racial threats, their average healthcare reform opposition score is 3.21 in the neutral condition, 3.20 in the Clinton condition, and 3.28 in the Obama condition. Among those white conservatives who perceive a racial threat, healthcare opposition is higher, with the average score being 3.88 in the neutral condition, 3.60 in the Clinton condition, and 3.59 in the Obama condition. Among highly racially resentful whites who perceive a racial threat, the average opposition score is 3.76 in the neutral frame, 3.46 in the Clinton frame, and 3.72 in the Obama frame.

However, it is important to note that the largest differences between those who perceive and do not perceive racial threats are among liberals and those with low racial resentment. For instance, in the neutral, Obama, and Clinton conditions, liberals who do not perceive racial threats have average healthcare reform of opposition scores of 1.39, 1.28, and 1.32 respectively. Among those liberals who do perceive a racial threat, their average healthcare reform opposition scores are 2.54 for the neutral frame, 3.31 for the Obama frame, and 2.47 for the Clinton frame.
### Table 4.3

**Average Healthcare Reform Opposition Across Racial Threat Perception**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full Sample of Whites</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal (N=528)</td>
<td>1.46 (0.74)</td>
<td>1.36 (0.59)</td>
<td>1.39 (0.69)</td>
<td>1.40 (0.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative (N=849)</td>
<td>3.68 (0.69)</td>
<td>3.56 (0.80)</td>
<td>3.56 (0.79)</td>
<td>3.60 (0.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=1,377)</td>
<td>2.68 (1.27)</td>
<td>2.56 (1.26)</td>
<td>2.64 (1.27)</td>
<td>2.71 (1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Resentment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Resentment (N=935)</td>
<td>1.90 (1.12)</td>
<td>1.86 (1.05)</td>
<td>1.98 (1.14)</td>
<td>1.91 (1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Resentment (N=877)</td>
<td>3.40 (0.94)</td>
<td>3.29 (1.03)</td>
<td>3.45 (0.92)</td>
<td>3.38 (0.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=1,812)</td>
<td>2.68 (1.27)</td>
<td>2.56 (1.26)</td>
<td>2.64 (1.27)</td>
<td>2.63 (1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whites Who Do Not Perceive Racial Threats</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological Group</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal (N=504)</td>
<td>1.39 (0.66)</td>
<td>1.32 (0.50)</td>
<td>1.28 (0.49)</td>
<td>1.33 (0.56)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative (N=571)</td>
<td>3.58 (0.78)</td>
<td>3.54 (0.82)</td>
<td>3.54 (0.81)</td>
<td>3.55 (0.80)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total (N=1,075)</td>
<td>2.42 (1.26)</td>
<td>2.33 (1.23)</td>
<td>2.40 (1.28)</td>
<td>2.45 (1.29)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Racial Resentment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Resentment (N=582)</td>
<td>1.84 (1.08)</td>
<td>1.75 (0.96)</td>
<td>1.92 (1.13)</td>
<td>1.84 (1.06)</td>
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<td>High Resentment (N=570)</td>
<td>3.21 (1.05)</td>
<td>3.20 (1.08)</td>
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<td>3.22 (1.07)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total (N=1,148)</td>
<td>2.42 (1.26)</td>
<td>2.33 (1.23)</td>
<td>2.40 (1.28)</td>
<td>2.38 (1.26)</td>
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<td><strong>Whites Who Perceive Racial Threats</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
<td>Mean (SD)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal (N=24)</td>
<td>2.54 (0.92)</td>
<td>2.47 (1.33)</td>
<td>3.31 (0.87)</td>
<td>2.81 (1.07)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative (N=278)</td>
<td>3.88 (0.42)</td>
<td>3.60 (0.78)</td>
<td>3.59 (0.75)</td>
<td>3.69 (0.70)</td>
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TABLE 4.3 (CONTINUED)

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<tr>
<th>Racial Resentment</th>
<th>Total (N=364)</th>
<th>Low Resentment (N=57)</th>
<th>High Resentment (N=307)</th>
<th>Total (N=302)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.70 (0.67)</td>
<td>3.13 (1.33)</td>
<td>3.76 (0.53)</td>
<td>3.70 (0.66)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.42 (0.96)</td>
<td>3.27 (1.18)</td>
<td>3.46 (0.91)</td>
<td>3.42 (0.96)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.54 (0.79)</td>
<td>2.75 (1.05)</td>
<td>3.72 (0.57)</td>
<td>3.54 (0.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.61 (0.79)</td>
<td>3.04 (1.20)</td>
<td>3.65 (0.71)</td>
<td>3.61 (0.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.55 (0.83)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.55 (0.83)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2007-2009 UCLA CCAP Study. White only sample, and data are weighted. Racial resentment has been collapsed such that scores >= mean are ‘high resentment’ and scores <= mean are ‘low resentment.’ Liberals are those respondents who liberal or strongly liberal, while conservatives are those respondents that are conservative or strongly conservative. The variables for racial resentment and ideological groups were created by averaging across the March 2008, September 2008, October 2008, and November 2009 waves of the study.

Interestingly, the highest average score is related to opposition to healthcare reform framed as Obama’s policy, not the Clinton or neutral condition. Similarly, those whites who perceive racial threats with low racial resentment oppose the neutral, Obama, and Clinton healthcare reforms on average at a rate of 3.13, 2.75, and 3.27 respectively. On the other hand, if a white person with low racial resentment does not perceive a racial threat, their average opposition is score is 1.84 for the neutral frame, 1.75 for the Clinton frame, and 1.92 for the Obama frame.

Below I graphically illustrate the differences in average healthcare opposition across the three experimental conditions and Figure 4.3 displays which differences are statistically different from zero. The differences in healthcare opposition between conservatives who do and do not perceive racial threats are not statistically significant. In addition, the difference in healthcare opposition between those whites who do and do not perceive a racial threat who are highly racially resentful in the Clinton condition is not statistically significant. Furthermore, the differences between conservatives that were statistically significant were small when compared to liberals.
Figure 4.3 Differences in Healthcare Reform Opposition

[Chart showing differences in ideological and racial resentment opposition between threatened and non-threatened groups under different conditions: Neutral, Clinton, Obama.]
White liberals who perceive a racial threat and were asked about healthcare reform framed as Obama’s policy had a higher average healthcare reform opposition score than liberal whites in this condition who did not perceive racial threats by roughly two points, and this is the largest difference of all. The differences between white liberals who perceive threats versus those who do not in the neutral and Clinton condition were just above one point and statistically significant.

Whites with low racial resentment who perceive a racial threat in the neutral frame have a higher average healthcare opposition score that is greater than those whites with low racial resentment who do not perceive racial threats by roughly 1.3, and this difference is statistically significant. Whites who perceive a racial threat and have low levels of racial resentment have a healthcare opposition score significantly higher by an average of 1.5 as compared to whites with low levels of racial resentment who do not perceive a racial threat. Whites with low racial resentment who do not perceive racial threats and were asked about Obama’s policy have an average score that is significantly lower (roughly .8) than those whites with low racial resentment that perceive threats in this condition.

The difference in average healthcare opposition among whites who perceive versus do not perceive racial threats with high racial resentment in the neutral frame is .55 and statistically significant. Those whites who perceive racial threats with high racial resentment who received the Obama policy framing have an average healthcare opposition score that is 3.72, higher than highly racially resentful whites who do not perceive threats with high racial resentment in the Obama condition by .44. These results suggest that racial threat is having an especially large effect among individuals with the most room to move in terms of healthcare opposition. This analysis also shows that racial threat perceptions increase the
already high opposition among conservatives and highly resentful whites, just not as drastically.

In order to determine if racial threat is interacting with the framing of healthcare opposition, I created six models of healthcare opposition – three models setting the baseline to the neutral condition and three models setting the baseline to the Clinton condition.\textsuperscript{41}

Table 4.4 presents the results of models of healthcare reform, using the baseline category in assessing the framing effect as the Clinton condition. This table reveals that racial resentment and conservatism are powerful predictors of opposition to healthcare reform across the three conditions in the first model with the full sample.

Specifically, holding all other variables constant, a one-unit increase in racial resentment increases healthcare opposition by .171. All else being equal, a one-unit increase in conservatism increases healthcare opposition by .288. When the sample is restricted to those whites who do not perceive racial threats, racial resentment and conservatism remain statistically significant predictors. In addition, healthcare reform framed as Obama’s policy, as opposed to the Clinton frame, increases the effect of conservatism by .138, all else being equal. Furthermore, there is a significant interaction between racial resentment and conservatism of .041.

When the sample is restricted to those whites who perceive racial threats, the Obama frame, racial resentment, conservatism, the interaction between the Obama frame and racial resentment, the interaction between the Obama frame and conservatism, the interaction between racial resentment and conservatism, and the three-way interaction between the Obama frame, racial resentment, and political conservatism are all statistically significant.

\textsuperscript{41} These models also examine if these results hold in the face of controlling for the potential possibility that differences in the effect of political interest across conditions could explain the significance of racial considerations. Whether or not political interest and interactions between the different frames are included or excluded in the model, the results do not change.
TABLE 4.4

EFFECT OF OBAMA FRAMING, RACIAL RESENTMENT, AND CONSERVATISM

MOST PRONOUNCED AMONG RACIALLY THREATENED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline: Clinton Frame</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Sample</td>
<td>No Perceived Racial Threat</td>
<td>Perceived Racial Threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Frame</td>
<td>0.153</td>
<td>0.105</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.144)</td>
<td>(0.296)</td>
<td>(0.123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Frame</td>
<td>-0.054</td>
<td>-0.140</td>
<td>4.077***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.654)</td>
<td>(0.232)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentment</td>
<td>0.171***</td>
<td>0.105**</td>
<td>5.313***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral*Resentment</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td>-0.103†</td>
<td>-0.375</td>
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<td>(0.243)</td>
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<td>(0.199)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obama*Resentment</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>-0.731**</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.603)</td>
<td>(0.766)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
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<td>Conservatism</td>
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<td>0.226***</td>
<td>0.759***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral*Conservatism</td>
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<td>-0.015</td>
<td>-0.350</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.723)</td>
<td>(0.799)</td>
<td>(0.186)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obama*Conservatism</td>
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<td>0.138*</td>
<td>-1.159***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.379)</td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment*Conservatism</td>
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<td>0.041**</td>
<td>-0.100***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.066)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral<em>Resentment</em>Conservatism</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>0.055</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.891)</td>
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<td>Obama<em>Resentment</em>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
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<td>(0.336)</td>
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<td>Highly Political Interested</td>
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<td>(0.621)</td>
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<td>0.012</td>
<td>-0.561*</td>
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<td>(0.282)</td>
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<td>(0.028)</td>
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<td>Highly Political Interested*Obama</td>
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<td>-0.086</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.940)</td>
<td>(0.539)</td>
<td>(0.292)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.840***</td>
<td>0.946***</td>
<td>-0.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.888)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>356</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.648</td>
<td>0.335</td>
</tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>339.0***</td>
<td>277.9***</td>
<td>8.038***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prob&gt;F</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2007-2009 UCLA CCAP Study. White only sample, and data are weighted. Variables for racial resentment and ideological groups were created by averaging across the March 2008, September 2008, and October 2008 waves of the study. Racial resentment has been collapsed such that scores at the mean and above are considered 'high resentment' and scores below the mean are considered 'low resentment. High political interest is the average score of how interested a person is in politics and current events across the March 2008, September 2008, and October 2008 waves of the survey. An average score=1 or very much interested was coded as highly politically interested. P-values in parentheses *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10
The key here is that, when a policy is framed as Obama’s policy as opposed to the Clinton frame, the multiplicative effect of racial resentment and conservatism is enhanced by .203 among those whites who perceive racial threats.

Table 4.5 presents the results when the baseline condition is the neutral framing of healthcare reform. In the full sample, while healthcare reform being framed as Obama’s policy as opposed to a neutral framing, racial resentment, and the interaction between racial resentment and conservatism all approach statistical significance as opposed to the neutral policy framing approach statistical significance, the only statistically significant covariate is political conservatism.

Specifically, a one-unit increase in political conservatism increases healthcare reform opposition by .308. When the sample is restricted to those whites that do not perceive racial threats, the Obama policy frame, political conservatism, the interaction between racial resentment and conservatism, the interaction between the Obama frame and racial resentment, the interaction between political conservatism and the Obama frame, and the three-way interaction between a policy being framed as Obama’s policy compared to a neutral framing, racial resentment, and conservatism are all statistically significant. It is important to note that this three-way interaction is negative and suggests that framing healthcare reform as Obama’s policy compared to a neutral framing has a negative effect on the interaction between racial resentment and political conservatism for these whites.

When the sample is restricted to those whites that perceive racial threats, the interaction between framing healthcare reform as Obama’s policy and conservatism, high political interest, the interaction between an Obama policy framing and high political interest, and the three-way interaction between the Obama frame, racial resentment, and conservatism are statistically significant. For those whites that are highly politically interested
whites that perceive racial threats, the Obama frame increases healthcare reform opposition by .864, all else being equal. Framing healthcare reform as Obama’s policy as opposed to a neutral framing decreases the effect of conservatism by .809.

However, framing a policy as Obama’s policy as compared to a neutral frame has a positive effect on the interaction between racial resentment and political conservatism. To interpret the three-way interaction terms, I generated predicted probabilities and graphically display them in Figure 4.4 below. These results show that racial threat perceptions increase the effect of racial resentment on conservatives in making these whites more opposed to healthcare reform. Moreover, opposition to healthcare reform is substantially higher among liberals who perceive a racial threat.

Figure 4.4 reveals that when liberals and conservatives do not perceive racial threats, they are clearly distinct from each other in terms of opposition to Obama-framed healthcare reform. While both lines have positive slopes, conservatives have higher predicted opposition scores across levels of racial resentment, and liberals have significantly lower predicted healthcare reform opposition scores. However, when liberals and conservative perceive racial threats, they become statistically indistinguishable. The slope for liberals who perceive racial threats is negative, but change in the prediction never occurs outside of the standard errors.

For conservatives, as racial resentment increases, opposition to healthcare reform also increases. At the highest level of racial resentment, the linear prediction for conservatives is almost at the maximum value for opposition to Obama-framed healthcare reform. Furthermore, the confidence interval surrounding this estimate is small, which means this prediction is fairly accurate. This confidence interval is does not overlap with the confidence interval for conservatives with low racial resentment who perceive threats.
TABLE 4.5
EFFECT OF OBAMA FRAMING, RACIAL RESENMENT, AND CONSERVATISM
MOST PRONOUNCED AMONG RACIALLY THREATENED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline: Neutral Frame</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Sample</td>
<td>No Perceived Racial Threat</td>
<td>Perceived Racial Threat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton Frame</td>
<td>-0.153</td>
<td>-0.105</td>
<td>-2.196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.144)</td>
<td>(0.296)</td>
<td>(0.123)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama Frame</td>
<td>-0.207†</td>
<td>-0.246*</td>
<td>1.876</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.201)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Resentiment</td>
<td>0.094†</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
<td>(0.949)</td>
<td>(0.541)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton*Resentiment</td>
<td>0.077</td>
<td>0.103†</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.243)</td>
<td>(0.095)</td>
<td>(0.199)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama*Resentiment</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.122*</td>
<td>-0.356</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.128)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.267)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>0.308***</td>
<td>0.211***</td>
<td>0.409†</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton*Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>0.350</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.723)</td>
<td>(0.799)</td>
<td>(0.186)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama*Conservatism</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.152*</td>
<td>-0.809*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.539)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment*Conservatism</td>
<td>0.022†</td>
<td>0.059***</td>
<td>-0.045</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.058)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.357)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton<em>Resentiment</em>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.018</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.891)</td>
<td>(0.260)</td>
<td>(0.315)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama<em>Resentiment</em>Conservatism</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
<td>-0.040*</td>
<td>0.148*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.292)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Political Interested</td>
<td>-0.097</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>-0.704**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.318)</td>
<td>(0.381)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Political Interested*Clinton</td>
<td>0.140</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>0.561*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.282)</td>
<td>(0.929)</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Political Interested*Obama</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>-0.098</td>
<td>0.864*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.364)</td>
<td>(0.460)</td>
<td>(0.012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.993***</td>
<td>1.051***</td>
<td>2.086†</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.079)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>1737</td>
<td>1381</td>
<td>356</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R² 0.634                  0.648                  0.335
Model_DF 14                14                    14
F 339.0***                277.9***              8.038***
Prob>F (0.000)             (0.000)                (0.000)

Source: 2007-2009 UCLA CCAP Study. White only sample, and data are weighted. Variables for racial resentment and ideological groups were created by averaging across the March 2008, September 2008, and October 2008 waves of the study. Racial resentment has been collapsed such that scores at the mean and above are considered ‘high resentment’ and scores below the mean are considered ‘low resentment. High political interest is the average score of how interested a person is in politics and current events across the March 2008, September 2008, and October 2008 waves of the survey. An average score=1 or very much interested was coded as highly politically interested. P-values in parentheses *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, † p<0.10
However, overall, the overlapping confidence intervals with liberals make these two groups statistically similar.

![Figure 4.4: Opposition to Obama-Framed Healthcare Reform Among Liberals and Conservatives](image)

Liberals who do not perceive racial threats in the Obama framing condition have the lowest predicted healthcare opposition score, on average, than any other whites, even at the highest level of racial resentment. On average, liberals who do not perceive racial threats are predicted, at the lowest level of racial resentment in the Obama frame, to have a healthcare opposition score of 1.16 and, at the highest level of racial resentment, are, on average, predicted to have a score of 2.02. Liberals who perceive racial threats have higher healthcare
opposition scores at all levels of racial resentment, even though it appears that predicted scores decrease as racial resentment increases in the Obama frame. Liberals who perceive racial threats at the lowest level of racial resentment in the Obama condition are predicted to score a 3.62 on average in terms of healthcare opposition, which is higher than the predicted score for both conservative groups with low racial resentment scores. This predicted score for liberals who perceive racial threats declines slightly to 3.04 for those with the highest level of racial resentment, but, given the confidence interval, this predicted score is not statistically different from that of liberals with the lowest level of racial resentment.

Conservatives who do not perceive racial threats in the Obama condition and who are very low in racial resentment are predicted, on average, to have a score of 2.61 in healthcare opposition. The predicted score for these conservatives increases as racial resentment increases in the Obama condition such that, at moderate levels of racial resentment, the prediction on average is 3.26. At the highest level of racial resentment, conservatives who do not perceive racial threats are predicted to score a 3.91 on average in terms of healthcare opposition. In the Obama frame, conservatives who do perceive a racial threat at the lowest level of racial resentment have a predicted score that is on average 2.02 – which is the same predicted score of highly racially resentful liberals who do not perceive racial threats. Conservatives who perceive racial threats in the Obama frame are, at moderate levels of threat predicted to score 2.97 on average in terms of healthcare opposition. At the highest level of racial resentment, those conservatives who perceive racial threats in the Obama frame look like those conservatives who do not perceive racial threats and are predicted, on average, to have a healthcare opposition score of 3.93.

In sum, these results provided evidence that racial threat perceptions have pronounced effects among liberals which significantly influence the impact of racial
resentment among these ideological groups. These findings support my contention that racial threat perceptions not only influence explicitly racial policies, but also implicitly racial policies.

4.8 Conclusion

Chapter five provides empirical evidence that racial threat perception, due to its moderating effect on the relationship between racial resentment and political ideology, exacerbates racial policy opposition. Whites are overwhelmingly unsupportive of affirmative action and this opposition is only magnified by racial threat perceptions for liberals and conservatives as racial resentment increases. Specifically, for liberals, high racial resentment among those who perceive racial threats increases the probability of strongly opposing affirmative action to almost 100%. For conservatives, racial threat increases the probability of strongly opposing affirmative action by almost 30 percentage points for conservatives with low racial resentment, and perceived racial threat increases the probability of being strongly opposed to affirmative action by 10 percentage points among conservatives who were moderately racially resentful.

While the increased opposition among racially resentful conservatives is important in understanding healthcare opposition, focusing on racial resentment is only a part of the story. Accounting for racial threat perceptions is fundamental in having a more complete understanding of whites’ opposition to this policy. Framing effects related to the public option portion of healthcare reform with respect to the Obama treatment only occur in the expected direction when the sample is restricted to those whites who experience a racial threat. The effects of interaction between racial resentment and conservatism in terms of opposing a public option framed as Obama’s policy are strongest among white individuals.
who perceive a racial threat. Opposition to healthcare reform is highest among political liberals in the Obama condition who perceive racial threats. Yet, by not including racial threat perceptions, opposition to healthcare reform at lower levels of racial resentment among conservatives is inflated. Overall, the analysis in chapter five provides support for the second component of my proposed model and confirms my theoretical expectations of my dissertation.
CHAPTER FIVE:
CONCLUSION

This dissertation examines whether perceived racial threat moderates the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment, and if there is variability in the relationship between racial resentment and conservatism based on individual perceptions of challenges to the racial hierarchy in American society. This dissertation argues that as the civil rights agenda has evolved, and as racial progress transforms American society, these egalitarian changes in the racial status quo exemplify a threat whites perceive because of the potential loss of racial hegemony whites have historically enjoyed. Furthermore, the prospect of parity between whites and blacks in American society in the minds of some whites is perceived as a violation of moral justice and individualism in light of blacks being seen as undeserving of such privileges.

When whites perceive a potential challenge to the racial status quo, or racial threat, they become fearful and anxious about the uncertainty of how racially egalitarian change will affect American society. As whites cope with threat perceptions, the connection their minds make between conservative values and African Americans’ perceived perpetual violation of them is strengthened over time. As a result, the relationship between racial resentment and ideology becomes more complicated, particularly for conservatives, and opposition to racially ameliorative and implicitly racial policies is ultimately strengthened.
Based on my theory, I predicted that racial threat perceptions are positively associated with political conservatism; moderate the relationship between racial resentment and conservatism; lead to the breakdown of the positive independent effect of conservatism in increasing racial resentment; make ideological differences in liberal and conservative levels of racial resentment dissipate; and increase opposition to racial policies because of increased racial resentment among liberals. Using the election and presidency of Barack Obama, the first African American President of the United States, as a lens to test the theoretical claims in this dissertation, I demonstrated that President Obama is perceived as a source of racial threat in the minds of whites, although conservatives are more likely to perceive racial threat than liberals. Perceiving a racial threat significantly reduces the independent effect of political ideology, and the strongest effect of racial threat occurs among liberals.

Furthermore, perceptions of racial threat are politically consequential. Accounting for racial threat perceptions significantly increases opposition to affirmative action and healthcare reform across ideological groups, but especially for political liberals. In fact, estimated predictions indicate that with respect to affirmative action, liberals are more strongly opposed than conservatives under such conditions. When healthcare reform in the form of universal coverage and a public option are linked to Obama, estimated predictions indicate that the increased opposition whites have toward healthcare reform is concentrated among those whites who experienced a racial threat in light of Obama’s election.

The empirical evidence in this dissertation reveals that the election of the first African American President of the United States powerfully created anxiety stemming, in part, from a concern over increased black political power. Chapter three revealed that concerns about African American empowerment are significantly related to whether or not whites experience anxiety about Obama’s election over and above enthusiasm, and similar
racial concerns are not significant predictors of threat experienced because of Bill Clinton, a similarly liberal but white Democratic president. Furthermore, in the case of racial threat perceptions stemming from Barack Obama, whether with respect to his nomination or his election, these concerns about blacks having too much political influence were significantly related to the anxiety whites experienced. This finding is significant because it comports with existing research, which has demonstrated that race has a distinct effect with respect to Barack Obama that is not found in evaluations of other presidents or presidential candidates (Tesler and Sears 2010; Kinder and Dale-Riddle 2012). My theory of racial threat explains why race matters so much in evaluations of Obama – it is because, for some whites, he is perceived as a threat to racial hierarchy.

Conservatives generally perceive racial threats at higher rates than liberals. President Obama’s election increased racial threat perceptions for conservatives and decreased such perceptions for liberals. It is important to note that to the extent that a political liberal did experience a threat, all but one in the sample experienced such a threat in the nomination. This finding is important because it provides evidence that the relationships uncovered in this research can and do occur in real politics. The finding that the election increased perceptions of threat for political conservatives is also important because it supports my contention that electing a political candidate is threatening for opposing partisans, and having a black candidate only adds to whites’ concerns.

The conditional effect of threat on the relationship between racial resentment and political ideology shows that the overlap between these two concepts is not a given under certain conditions. The variability in this relationship reveals that when you expose people, even some liberals, to a context that is threatening, the pressure from this situations makes everyone look and act alike. This finding is important because people are indistinguishably
racially intolerant and unsupportive of racial policies, which makes it difficult, at best, to accurately point out a racist person when you see one.

An implication of these results is that perceptions of racial threat create a condition in which racial considerations for some liberals become more important than ideological attitudes. For these liberals, who in this research were less educated, female, and working class, racial considerations were able to trump ideology and produce large effects. It is also important to highlight that, consistent with my expectations, conservative change was modest at best. It is not a far reach for conservatives to perceive racial threats and be racially resentful in virtue of their moral foundations and ideological principles. Therefore, the difference in the effect size of perceived racial threat between liberals and conservatives, particularly the small effect of threat on conservatives, may be indicative of the fact that conservatives do not have a lot of room to move on the racial resentment scale or opposition to racial policies.

With respect to affirmative action, racial threat perceptions increase opposition across ideological and racially resentful groups, and the largest increase is among liberals and those low in racial resentment. No matter how large the increase, racial threat perceptions increase strong opposition to affirmative action among all whites to at least 85%. Particularly illuminating is the change in the probabilities that occurs by not taking racial threat perceptions into account with respect to affirmative action. While the non-threatening white sample and total white sample in the affirmative action models share similar patterns, I find that ignoring perceived racial threat in the total white sample inflates opposition to racial policies among conservatives with low to moderate racial resentment. This suggests that we may have previously overestimated the impact of racial resentment among these conservatives and inflated their opposition. This possibility speaks to a key facet of the
problem this dissertation addresses – we too often misconstrue conservatives as racists and penalize them in their opposition to racial policies.

One of the interesting findings regarding healthcare reform is that average levels of support did not vary within groups across the different conditions between the neutral and Obama frames. This could be a function of the fact that, by November of 2009, healthcare was so closely linked to Obama that, even without mentioning his name, discussing healthcare was enough to elicit strong opposition among highly racially resentful and conservative individuals. Yet, the analysis also reveals that racial threat conditions the effect of racial resentment and conservatism in opposition to this policy, specifically when it is linked to Obama. These results hold whether or not the reference group is a neutral frame or a Clinton frame.

Conservatives who do not perceive racial threats have a much lower intercept, or base-level opposition, than conservatives who do perceive racial threats. It suggests that racial threat perceptions are strengthening opposition at lower levels of racial resentment for conservatives. Equally interesting is the effect of racial threat in increasing opposition among liberals. The differences in the probabilities were larger in this case for these individuals. Liberals who perceive racial threats oppose healthcare reform that is linked to Obama at rates that are close to conservatives. These results imply that by not taking racial threat perceptions into account, we have previously underestimated liberal opposition to policies that have become racialized and the impact of racism in their formation of political judgments related to African Americans – which is the other important side of the problem this dissertation addresses.

The results of the empirical chapters of my dissertation confirm my hypotheses and support my contention that racial threat significantly influences the relationship between
racial resentment and conservatism. These findings underscore the importance of accounting for the political context when trying to understand the relationship of conservatism with racial resentment.

However, there are important limitations to the research presented in this dissertation. First, while three different measures of racial threat are used to assess the degree to which the association between conservatism and racial resentment varies, causality has not been established. This dissertation cannot speak to whether or not racial threat causes the increased convergence of racial resentment and conservatism; rather the evidence provided suggests that racial threat moderates their confluence. In addition, while there is variability in threat perceptions, it is limited. However, this was to be expected given the euphoria surrounding the historical milestone of electing the first African American President. The fact that I was able to produce such results in the face of the overall enthusiasm generated in the 2008 election suggests that my test of the role of racial threat perceptions using the election of Barack Obama is a conservative test of my theory. Furthermore, the fact that I was able to produce significant results is striking.

In addition, while I show that the assumption about a single measure of conservatism is reasonable given my data, a more complete measure of conservatism might strengthen the analysis of my dissertation. Furthermore, my research substantiates the contention that racial resentment as currently conceptualized is better at capturing prejudice for liberals than conservatives (Feldman and Huddy 2005). A conceptualization of racial resentment that purges the scale of government references might also strengthen the analysis of this study.

Limitations aside, this dissertation offers interesting avenues for future research. First, while it was argued that racial threats are not constant, the length of time that threat
perceptions can persist or influence political judgments is undetermined. Second, the applicability of racial threat to non-white populations (i.e. African Americans and Latinos) may also be a worthwhile research endeavor to explore. Given that some research suggests that minorities can also be motivated to preserve the status quo (Jost et al. 2003), it would be interesting to examine the extent to which African Americans and Latinos perceive threats and what the consequences of such perceptions, if any, would be for these groups. In examining the question of whether or not racial threat can apply to African Americans and Latinos, it would be important to utilize better data sources which have large enough minority samples and an array of appropriate questions designed to assess the unique characteristics of racial attitudes among these groups. For instance, considering that African Americans are overwhelmingly, and were almost invariantly, supportive of President Obama in 2008, assessing racial threat and its consequences among this group was not possible with the data available.

Finally, I have modeled the relationships here in strictly linear terms. However, especially with respect to racial policy opposition, there might be reason to believe such relationships are curvilinear given that conservatives are more likely to chronically experience threat (Altemeyer 1998). Future research should assess the possibility that threat matters only at extremely low and extremely high values and consider the possibility of a ceiling effect, especially for political conservatives.

To conclude, this dissertation is a first step in understanding the conditions for which the relationship between conservatism and racial resentment varies. Under conditions of threat, liberal-conservative distinctions fade to the point where everyone looks like a conservative. The result is a substantial increase in opposition to explicitly ameliorative racial policies and those policies that are implicitly linked to African Americans. The influence of
racial threat is especially troubling because the increasing combination of racial resentment and conservatism makes it difficult to accurately identify a racist when you see one. In addition, the paradoxical effect among liberals is also troubling because it suggests that as blacks’ demands have changed, and as the focus of equality is now removing the vestiges of racial discrimination for full equality, those who are supposed to be most committed and sympathetic to black concerns can be the biggest opponents under the right political circumstances. This dissertation research ultimately demonstrates that racial threat is a significant factor that influences how whites formulate political judgments and should be considered in any analysis that deals with issues of racial resentment and political conservatism.
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