

The Racial Components of 'Race-Neutral' Crime Policy Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

While past studies find evidence of a connection between race and crime in the minds of many whites, several gaps remain in our knowledge of this association. We use a multi-method approach to examine more closely the racial component of whites' support for ostensibly race-neutral crime policies. First, using conventional correlational analysis, we show that negative stereotypes of African Americans—specifically, the belief that blacks are violent and lazy—are an important source of support for punitive policies such as the death penalty and increasing prison terms. Second, using a survey experiment, we show that negative evaluations of black prisoners are much more strongly tied to support for punitive policies than are evaluations of white prisoners. The findings from our multi-method approach suggest that when many whites think of punitive crime policies to deal with violent offenders they are thinking of black offenders. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings for the intersection of race, crime, and political behavior.

Keywords: Stereotypes, Race, Crime, Public opinion

Introduction

To what extent do racial attitudes influence whites' support for punitive crime policies, such as the death penalty, increasing prison terms for violent crimes, and so on? Crime, like welfare, is not an explicitly racial issue, such as affirmative action or busing. Yet both issues have become linked to race in the minds of many whites who (inaccurately) tend to see the typical welfare recipient and criminal as being African-American. In earlier studies, we (Peffley, Hurwitz and Sniderman 1997; Hurwitz and Peffley 1997) investigated the linkage between race and crime by exploring the conditions under which whites' stereotypes of blacks biased their evaluations of African-Americans in the context of crime. In a series of survey experiments where the race (and other characteristics) of criminal suspects were randomly manipulated, whites who viewed "most blacks" as violent and lazy responded to black targets much more harshly than they did to white targets.

Left unanswered by these studies, however, is the politically important question of whether racial attitudes influence more general *policy* attitudes toward crime. It is one thing to show that negative stereotypes bias evaluations of criminal suspects who are black; it is quite another to show that whites' racial attitudes somehow influence their more general policy attitudes, such as support for the death penalty. Such a linkage would suggest that a strong racial component underlies attitudes toward these ostensibly race-neutral policies. It would also suggest that when many whites think of punitive crime policies to deal with violent offenders they are thinking of black offenders.

While previous research finds evidence of a connection between race and crime in the minds of many whites, prior studies, including our own, suffer from various limitations, to be discussed below. Building on the encouraging findings of prior work, we use a multi-method approach to examine the racial component of whites' support for ostensibly race-neutral crime policies. First, using conventional

correlational analysis, we show that negative stereotypes of African Americans—specifically, the belief that blacks are violent and lazy—are an important source of support for punitive policies such as the death penalty and increasing prison terms. Second, using a survey experiment, we show that negative evaluations of black prisoners are much more strongly tied to support for punitive policies than are evaluations of white prisoners. Importantly, the influence of racial attitudes on policy attitudes remains strong after a variety of controls (e.g., stereotypes of whites, political predispositions, and demographic variables) are introduced into the analysis. The findings from our multi-method approach demonstrate that, for many whites, support for punitive crime policies is based, at least in part, on their negative evaluations of African Americans.

We begin with a review of prior inquiries into the role that racial attitudes plays in shaping support for ostensibly race-neutral policies like welfare and crime. We then turn to an explanation of our multi-method approach. After presenting the results of our analysis, we conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings for the intersection of race, crime, and political behavior.

Crime Policy Attitudes

Public support for punitive crime policies has been a potent political force in the last decade. In response to the public's escalating fear of crime throughout the 1990's,¹ policy makers have enacted a raft of punitive anti-crime measures, such as increased application of the death penalty, "three strikes" laws, mandatory sentencing, and so on (e.g., see Warr 1995, Petinico 1994). And while the effectiveness of such "get-tough" measures in deterring crime is debatable (Smith 1997), the costs

¹ Throughout much of the 1990s (and as recently as April 1998), more Americans rated crime as the "most important problem" in the Gallup survey than any other issue. While the healthy economy has

appear steep: not only have young African-American males been incarcerated at unprecedented rates, but the massive investment in law enforcement and prison construction by state governments has been at the expense of social programs that often benefit the poor and minorities (e.g., Tonry 1995).

Thus, while crime clearly matters to the mass public, it matters just as much to elites, who pay extraordinarily close attention to such public concerns. There is compelling evidence that public opinion in the area of crime is extremely influential—e.g., state legislators have been found to pay close attention to the attitudes of the state citizenry in formulating sentencing guidelines (Bowers and Waltman 1993), while state judges have been found to be more likely to uphold the death penalty where the opinion climate of the state is most supportive (Brace and Gann Hall, 1997).

Surprisingly, there have been few studies of public opinion toward crime in the political science literature, despite the salience of the issue and the large portion of state budgets devoted to anti-crime measures. In an effort to remedy this inattention, we explore the antecedents of public attitudes toward crime and punishment in this paper. Our primary focus is on one potential source of support for such policies—racial attitudes. The question we take up here is: to what extent do racial attitudes influence whites' support for punitive crime policies, such as the death penalty, increasing prison terms for violent crimes, and so on?

There are several reasons for expecting race and crime to be linked in public opinion, one of which stems from recent evidence that racial attitudes (including stereotypes) influence policy attitudes on other ostensibly "race-neutral" issues such as welfare (Gilens 1996, 1998, 1999; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Peffley, Hurwitz and Sniderman 1997; Peffley and Hurwitz 1998). Gilens (1996), for

caused economic worries to recede in importance, the dwindling crime rates of the past decade have not had a comparable effect in lessening the salience of crime.

example, found that whites' opposition to welfare is shaped more by their belief (i.e., stereotypes) that blacks are lazy than their belief that poor people are lazy. In addition, opposition to welfare was found to be much more strongly associated with evaluations of a black welfare mother than a comparably described white welfare mother. Thus, whites' opposition to welfare appears to be "strongly rooted in their beliefs about blacks, particularly their perceptions of black welfare recipients" (p. 600). If the race-policy linkage exists in this domain, there is every reason to believe it exists in the criminal justice realm.

Crime, like welfare, has doubtless become "racialized" in the minds of many Americans, who are exposed to media accounts in which a disproportionate number of stories of African-Americans pertain to crime (Jamieson 1992). Crime stories in local news broadcasts, for example, tend to over-represent violent crimes where the perpetrator is black beyond any actual crime statistics (e.g., Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). And black suspects in these stories are typically portrayed more menacingly than white suspects (Entman 1992; Entman and Rojecki 2000).

Experimental evidence suggests that even a brief visual image of a black male in a typical nightly news story on crime is powerful and familiar enough to activate viewers' negative stereotypes of blacks, producing racially biased evaluations of black criminal suspects (Peffley, Shields, and Williams 1994). In one of the more convincing experimental demonstrations of the tendency for people to associate violent crime with African Americans, Gilliam and associates (Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon and Wright 1996; Gilliam and Iyengar 2000) had non-college adults watch a local newscast that included a crime story that manipulated the skin color of a male murder suspect. The authors found that when the perpetrator was depicted as African American, more subjects endorsed punitive crime policies and negative racial stereotypes after watching the news broadcast. The verisimilitude of the news broadcast and the size and diversity of the participant samples in the Gilliam, et al. studies are exceptional for an experimental

design. Nevertheless, one cannot help but wonder how the results might differ for a (probability) sample drawn from outside the Los Angeles area, where viewers are fed a steady diet of crime coverage on the local news.

Results from survey studies using probability samples drawn from different areas of the country thus provide a necessary complement to experimental results. In both national and local surveys, we (Peffley, Hurwitz and Sniderman 1997; Hurwitz and Peffley 1997) investigated the linkage between race and crime by exploring the conditions under which whites' stereotypes of blacks biased their evaluations of African-Americans in the context of crime. In a series of survey experiments where the race (and other characteristics) of criminal suspects were randomly manipulated, whites who viewed "most blacks" as violent and lazy responded to black targets much more harshly than they did to white targets.²

Left unanswered by our earlier work, however, is the politically important question of whether racial attitudes influence more general *policy* attitudes toward crime. It is one thing to show that negative stereotypes bias evaluations of criminal suspects who are black; it is quite another to show that whites' racial attitudes somehow influence attitudes toward more general policies (such as capital punishment) even when the race of the criminal is not specified. Such a linkage would suggest that a strong racial component underlies attitudes toward these ostensibly race-neutral policies.

To be sure, a handful of existing survey studies find an association between various measures of

² For example, in the "prison furlough" experiment where the race of the prisoners in the furlough program is manipulated, whites who endorse negative stereotypes of African-Americans are far more likely to oppose furloughs for black prisoners and were more likely to believe that the prisoner will commit more crimes while out on furlough. Stereotypes were essentially unrelated to responses to white prisoners, however (Hurwitz and Peffley 1997).

racial attitudes and support for capital punishment among whites. While certainly encouraging, the correlational evidence uncovered by these studies is unlikely to convince a skeptic. Kinder and Mendleberg (1995), for example, found an *indirect* linkage between racial prejudice (i.e., racial stereotypes) and support for the death penalty using data from the 1990 General Social Survey. Yet, it is only when the authors make the debatable assumption that racial prejudice *causes* conservatism (but not vice versa) that they find an indirect effect of prejudice on approval of capital punishment, via conservatism.

In another study using data from the National Election Studies, Kinder and Sanders (1996) found a direct association between approval of the death penalty and their measure of “racial resentment,” defined as a subtle form of contemporary animosity toward blacks and measured with survey questions that “distinguish between those whites who are generally more sympathetic to blacks and those who are generally unsympathetic (p. 106).” A skeptic, however, is likely to raise questions about the authors’ measure of racial resentment, which has been faulted for confounding racial prejudice with political orientations, such as individualism and conservatism (e.g., Sniderman, Crosby and Howell 2000). Although the authors control for a few political principles (e.g., limited government and equal opportunity) and social background, there is a very real possibility that their results are spurious, inasmuch as omitted variables, such as ideology or ethnocentrism, may condition both racial resentment and support for capital punishment.

We attempt to avoid the limitations of prior research in the current study by using a multi-method approach to examine the racial component of whites’ support for race-neutral crime policies. First, using conventional correlational analysis, we show that negative stereotypes of African Americans—specifically, the belief that blacks are violent and lazy—are an important source of support for punitive

policies. Our measure of racial stereotypes is, presumably, less confounded with political orientations than other measures of racial attitudes, such as racial resentment. In addition, we impose a variety of stringent controls for potentially spurious effects. Second, using a survey experiment, we show that negative evaluations of black prisoners are much more strongly tied to support for punitive policies than are evaluations of white prisoners. We argue that the two complementary approaches point to a single conclusion: whites' support for punitive crime policies contains an undeniable racial component.

Methods, Data, and Instrumentation

Data

The data for the analysis are drawn from a probability telephone survey (N = 501) of adults in the Lexington, Kentucky area, conducted by the University of Kentucky Survey Research Center (UKSRC). White respondents were selected through a variant of random digit dialing procedures and interviewed by the professional staff for approximately fifteen to twenty minutes between June 22 and July 5, 1994 (see Appendix Tables A.1 and A.2 for further details).

Measures

Support for Punitive Crime Policies. Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the following statements on a 4-point scale: "I strongly favor the death penalty for anyone convicted of murder" and "The best way to deal with violent crime is to dramatically increase prison terms for people who commit violent crimes." Responses to the two questions were summed to form the Approve Punitive Policies Index that ranges from high approval (coded 2) to low approval (8) (Appendix items I.A. and B.). Importantly, these two items appeared early in the interview, prior to

questions that would cue the respondent to any racial content of the survey.³ The Appendix presents all survey items, scale ranges, means, and alpha coefficients.

Black Racial Stereotypes. While analysts have used an array of descriptors to assess stereotypes of African-Americans, we focus on two central attributes -- laziness and violence -- which: (1) capture contemporary white resentment toward blacks; and (2) are particularly relevant to whites' political judgments of crime. "Old-fashioned" racism was founded on beliefs about the genetic inferiority of blacks. Current white stereotypes -- fueled by media portrayals and political rhetoric -- are more likely to characterize blacks pejoratively as a violent underclass of "welfare blacks," "streetwise blacks" and "ghetto blacks" (Devine and Baker 1991; Edsall and Edsall 1991). Moreover, it is this picture of blacks as a violent, urban underclass which should influence whites' views on crime. Respondents were asked to rate "most blacks" on five semantic differential scales, each arrayed on a bipolar metric ranging from 1 to 7 (see Appendix [items II.A.] for the precise wording): "prone to violence" (vs. "not prone to violence"), "short-tempered" (vs. "even-tempered"), "hostile" (vs. "friendly"), "hard-working" (vs. "lazy")

³ The wording of the two punitive items is admittedly not ideal but certainly adequate for our purposes. First, while one might be concerned that punitive attitudes could be confounded with lower education inasmuch as both Likert items are worded in the same direction and may therefore promote a slight "yea-saying" (i.e., acquiescence) bias that is related to education (Converse and Presser 1986, 38-39), the strong controls for political knowledge, conformity, and demographic variables (e.g., education) imposed in the analyses below, should help to minimize any such confounds. Second, although the exact wording of the items may have also diminished the relationship between racial attitudes and punitiveness, (e.g., some respondents may have disagreed with the statement, "I *strongly* support the death penalty..." because they do not support it strongly, and some respondents may actually disagree with the idea of increasing prison terms for violent criminals because they think presumed murderers should receive the death penalty, not longer prison terms), the robust correlation between responses to the two items ($r = .39$) suggests that such problems of interpretation were not widespread among our respondents.

and "prefer to be self-supporting" (vs. "prefer to live off welfare"). Responses across the five scales were summed to form the Black Stereotype Index, where lower values indicate more negative assessments of most blacks.

Control Variables. To minimize the prospects for spurious relationships, we include several control variables that are potentially associated with both African-American stereotypes and attitudes toward crime. For example, to control for the possibility that punitive attitudes toward crime are linked to black stereotypes because people with a more jaundiced view of human nature rate everyone (not just blacks) poorly, we included a White Stereotype Index (see Appendix items II.B.), which consists of the same adjective pairs used in the Black Stereotype Index (but asked in reference to "most whites").

In addition to the rather standard battery of political (partisan and ideological identifications) and demographic (education, age, and gender [male = 0, female =1]) variables, we include two other control variables with a special relevance to crime attitudes: fear of crime and conformity. The Fear of Crime Index (see Appendix items III.A.1-3.) has been coded so that lower values reflect feelings of vulnerability and perceptions of increasing crime rates. Conformity, which has long been associated with the rejection of social groups and support for punitive measures such as the death penalty (Altemeyer 1988, Kohn 1977, Feldman and Stenner 1997, Tyler 1982), is coded so that lower values indicate a desire for an orderly world in which people obey authority and adhere to rules and conventions (see Appendix items III.B.). In keeping with the coding strategy described thus far, the other variables in the analysis are coded so that lower values correspond to more conservative, racially intolerant, and punitive responses so that expected relationships yield positive coefficients.

Importantly, all the variables in the analysis were coded to a 0 to 1 scale so that unstandardized

coefficients could be compared within and across equations.⁴

Analysis

The Impact of Racial Stereotypes

Table I (below) reports the OLS results obtained from regressing approval of punitive policies on racial stereotypes and the various controls. As revealed by the first row of coefficients, negative stereotypes of African Americans are a significant factor underlying support for punitive crime policies. Indeed, the size of the coefficient (.22) indicates that the tendency to stereotype blacks as violent and lazy is one of the more important sources of support for such policies. Given the 0 to 1 coding of the variables, the coefficient indicates that a movement from the lowest to the highest point on the black stereotype scale is associated with a .22 increase in punitive attitudes. By contrast, the effect of stereotypes of whites is much smaller (-.12) and statistically insignificant.

As expected, whites' approval of punitive policies emanates from a variety of non-racial elements as well. Supporters of capital punishment and stiffer prison sentences tend to be more fearful of crime, value conformity, and are more conservative. In addition, males are more supportive of punitive crime policies than are females.

Racial Attitudes Measured with a Survey Experiment

While the effects of racial stereotypes in Table I are significant, one shortcoming of these (or any) correlational data is that, despite the inclusion of a broad range of control variables, it is impossible to say with certainty that the effects are not, to some degree, spurious. To gain better leverage over the question of how race affects judgments on crime policies, we employed an experimental manipulation in

⁴ The correlations between the Black Stereotype Index and various non-racial predispositions included in the analysis are as follows: Safety (.14), Conformity (.23), Ideology (-.03), and Party ID (.05). The correlation between Safety and Conformity is .19.

which half the respondents were asked about black prisoners and the other half an identical question with reference to white prisoners. In this "prisoner furlough" experiment, respondents were read a description of "programs to help prisoners--many of whom are [black/white]--adjust to life outside prison by granting them weekend furloughs near the end of their prison terms" (see Appendix item IV). They were then asked, first, the extent to which they approved of the program, and second, in a subsequent question, the likelihood that such prisoners would "commit more crimes while on a weekend furlough." For this analysis, responses to the two questions ($r = .53$) are combined into a *Negative Evaluations of Prisoners Index*, with more negative evaluations receiving lower scores.

By comparing the degree to which evaluations of black versus white prisoners predict respondent approval of punitive policies (i.e., capital punishment and stiffer prison sentences), we can assess the degree to which two ostensibly race neutral policies are affected by racial attitudes. If respondents do, in fact, think about punishment in a truly race-neutral fashion, then such attitudes would be linked to evaluations of both black and white prison furlough candidates at approximately the same level. If, on the other hand, individuals' views of punishment for criminals (whose race has not been specified) are tainted by a racial component, then we would expect support for punitive crime policies to be more strongly tied to evaluations of *black* prisoners than white prisoners. An important advantage of this technique is that, by randomly assigning respondents to the two experimental treatment groups, we can be assured that any difference in responses is due to the manipulation of race, and not to a confounding variable (e.g., predispositions or demographics). By embedding this experiment in a probability survey, we also retain the ability to generalize to a wider population.

To gauge the relative importance of black versus white prison furlough candidates in shaping support for race neutral crime policies, the equation in Table I was reestimated, substituting three new

racial attitude variables for the stereotype variables: negative evaluations of prisoners, race of prisoners (black = 0, white = 1), and an interactive term formed by multiplying race by evaluations.⁵ Our primary interest is in the interactive term, which indicates whether identifying the furlough candidates as black significantly increases the relationship between negative evaluations and support for punitive policies.

The OLS results are displayed in Table II (below). The interaction coefficient (row 2) is highly significant, thus confirming the power of race to influence support for punitive policies. The findings show a dramatic difference in the degree to which negative assessments of black versus white prisoners are associated with approval for punitive measures. Given the coding of the variables, the coefficient for prisoner evaluations (row 1) indicates the effect for evaluations of *black* prisoners. The unstandardized coefficient for black prisoners ($b = .37$) is approximately three times as strong as the computed coefficient for white prisoners ($.37 - .23 = .12$), the latter of which is barely significant at the .05 level. The implication is that when people think about punitive policies such as the death penalty or increasing prison terms, they are thinking primarily about black criminals, not white criminals.⁶

Conclusions

To summarize, we now have consistent evidence that whites' support for "get tough" crime policies contains a strong racial component. Similar to studies of public opposition to welfare policy, support for punitive crime measures appears to be strongly rooted in beliefs about blacks, particularly reactions to black criminals. Approval of policies that were enacted with increasing frequency in the last

⁵ The stereotype variables were not included in the model because the black stereotype is a strong determinant of evaluations of black prisoners and thus works indirectly to shape support for crime policies.

⁶ Importantly, the greater effects for the black prisoner condition in Table 2 do not appear to result from greater variance in evaluations of black versus white prisoners. The standard deviations for evaluations of black prisoners (1.60) and white prisoners (1.59) are quite similar.

decade and promoted by both political parties—increased application of the death penalty and stiffer prison sentences (e.g., “three strikes” laws and mandatory sentencing)—do not appear race-neutral from the vantage point of public opinion. Several culprits appear responsible for creating and exacerbating the linkage between race and crime. Media coverage of crime that “primes” such a connection is one likely source. Another is racially “coded” political rhetoric (Edsall and Edsall 1991, Mendelberg 1997) such as the controversial Willie Horton ad used in the 1988 presidential election, which gave an African American face to violent crime in America.

It is also likely that once punitive policies were enacted, such programs further contributed to the association between race and crime. During the “war on drugs” in the 1980’s, for example, the much stiffer punishment for “crack” versus powder cocaine resulted in dramatically higher arrest (and incarceration) rates of black youths (Kennedy 1997, Meier 1994). Higher arrest and incarceration rates for African Americans naturally meant more opportunities for damaging media portrayals and thus helped fuel the stereotype of blacks as a violent underclass. Of course, racial attitudes are only one source of whites’ views on crime. We found a variety of arguably non-racial orientations (e.g., fear of crime, a desire for conformity, conservatism) to underlie a desire to “get tough” on crime. Thus, while our results clearly show that race is an important factor in shaping whites’ views on crime, it is by no means the only factor.

Nonetheless, the results illustrate how stunningly easy it must be for elites to “play the race card” -- either as candidates for office or as proponents of “get tough” agendas. It has long been suspected that individuals could introduce race into a message by focusing on issues such as crime, welfare, and affirmative action. In the most notable examples, however, the propagandists took precautions to *explicitly* infuse such discussions with race. In the notorious Willie Horton campaign used against

Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis in 1988, for example, Dukakis was painted as soft on crime for supporting a prison furlough for Willie Horton, who then committed atrocious crimes while on furlough. The spot was racialized through the display of Horton's photograph, which captured an image of a menacing looking, and clearly African-American, man (see, e.g., Jamieson 1992, Kinder and Sanders 1996, Mendelberg 1997).

As another example, Senator Jessie Helms (R., North Carolina) ran an oppositional ad against Harvey Gantt, his African-American opponent for the Senate in 1990, which showed the hands of a white individual reading and then destroying a job rejection letter while an announcer intones: "You needed that job, and you were the best qualified. But they had to give it to a minority because of a racial quota. Is that really fair?" In these infamous examples, therefore, the racial association was both explicit and unmistakable.

Our results suggest, however, that racial appeals may be possible even without an explicit racial referent. To the contrary, they suggest that, when many whites think about issues pertaining to crime and punishment, they may be thinking about them in the context of black criminals, even when racial identities are ambiguous or entirely absent. Quite possibly, in other words, propagandists may have the capacity to appeal to racial animosity through the *mere mention* of policies such as crime and welfare--policies that have apparently become so racialized that they naturally bring an image of African-Americans to the mind of the individual.

While our results appear robust, several caveats to our findings deserve special mention. One may reasonably question, for example, whether our results can be readily generalized to the nation as a whole. In one sense, however, the location of our study can be viewed as a more conservative test of the hypothesis that crime has become "racialized." Admittedly, Lexington is not a major metropolitan

area. It does not have a substantial minority population: about 13% of the city's residents are African American. Neither does it have a higher than average crime rate. Thus, the opportunity to cover violent crime on local news broadcasts or to portray perpetrators as being predominantly black is much more limited than is likely to be the case in a major metropolitan area. The strong connection between race and crime in our results, then, is likely to be even more powerful in many other areas of the country where the linkage receives priming on a regular basis.

On the other hand, the salience of crime may have been higher in 1994, the year in which our study was conducted, than it is today. Not only are the 1994 elections referred to as the year of the "angry white male," but congressional campaign ads featuring the candidate at a firing range and talking tough on crime were so common in 1994 that the candidates "looked more like they were running for local sheriff than the U.S. Congress" (Engberg, "CBS Evening News," November 7, 1994). But while the salience of crime may have diminished from 1994 levels, it remains an important public concern (see Footnote 1) and racially biased coverage of crime remains a staple of local television news (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). Thus, while our results need to be replicated in a contemporary context, we would be quite surprised if racial attitudes were not strongly associated with support for punitive policies.

A final limitation is that our study, like the majority of scholarly work on the effect of race on public opinion, focuses exclusively on whites' perceptions of blacks, thus ignoring the opinions of African-Americans. The existing evidence reveals something of a paradox in need of further investigation. On the one hand, blacks are subjected to the same negative portrayals of African-Americans in the news media as whites, thus predisposing blacks to much the same "racialized" views of crime (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000). On the other hand, survey evidence points to a vast chasm between the races in their views of the criminal justice system, originating from the fundamentally different

experiences of whites and blacks with the criminal justice system. The more negative attitudes of blacks than whites toward the police, the courts and the rest of the criminal justice system doubtless result from blacks being far more likely to be apprehended, incarcerated, subjected to vehicular searches, and so on than whites (Kennedy 1997, Sidanius and Pratto 1999). Understanding the social and political tensions associated with this race gap is a major challenge facing students of race and politics.

Also needed, of course, is a more far-reaching investigation of the genesis of racialized crime views. To what extent is the linkage between race and crime tethered by the news, entertainment television, pre-adult socialization, or personal experiences? While a few scholars have embarked on such an investigation, (e.g., Entman and Rojecki 2000), much remains to be done.

Appendix

Survey Measures and Sample Characteristics

I. *Approval of Punitive Crime Policies* ($r = .39$; initial scale ranges from 2 [more approval] to 8 [less approval])

A. I strongly favor the death penalty for anyone convicted of murder. (Mean = 1.864 on a 4-point scale.^a)

B. The best way to deal with violent crime is to dramatically increase prison terms for people who commit violent crimes. (Mean = 1.50)^a

II. *Racial Stereotypes*

A. The Black Stereotype Index (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$) items were based on the following question:

Now I have some questions about different groups in our society. I'm going to describe a 7-point scale that I'd like you to use to describe the characteristics of most blacks...Where would you rate most blacks on this scale where 1 means _____ and 7 means _____ [and 4 means you think most blacks don't lean one way or the other]? The five semantic differentials were: hard-working--lazy, prone to violence--not prone to violence, short-tempered--even-tempered, prefer to be self-supporting--prefer to live off welfare, and hostile--friendly. Responses to the 7-point scales are coded such that lower values (the scale ranges from 5 to 35) indicate more negative assessments of most blacks.

B. The White Stereotypes Index (Cronbach's $\alpha = .67$) was assessed by asking respondents to use the same five scales to describe some characteristics of most white people.

The effects of the black stereotype variable are nearly identical to those of a stereotype difference variable computed by subtracting ratings of blacks from ratings of whites on identical scales.

III. *Predispositions*

A. Fear of Crime (Cronbach's $\alpha = .47$; scale ranges from 3 [more fear] to 12 [less fear]):

1. How safe do you feel, or would you feel, being out alone in your neighborhood at night--very safe (1), somewhat safe (2) somewhat unsafe (3), or very unsafe (4)? (Mean = 1.91) Reflected.
2. Over the past five years or so, would you say that violent crime in our nation has increased a lot (1), a little (2), stayed about the same (3), decreased a little (4), or decreased a lot (5)? (Mean = 1.40)
3. Of all the problems facing the country today, such as the deficit, the economy, and troubles overseas, would you say that the problem of crime is NO MORE important than many other problems (1), is one of the MOST important problems (2), or is the SINGLE MOST important problem our nation faces today (3)? (Mean = 2.06). Reflected.

B. Conformity: Although there are a number of qualities that people feel that children should have, every person thinks that some are more important than others. For each pair of desirable qualities I read, tell me which quality you think is more important for a child to have: Independence or respect for elders? Obedience or self-reliance? Curiosity or good manners? (Note: the first and second items were reverse coded so that selecting the conformity option on all three items equals 1, selecting both options equals 2 and selecting the non-conformity option equals 3. The Conformity scale ranges from 3 [more conformity] to 9 with a mean of 5.02.)

IV. *Negative Evaluations of Prisoners; Prison Furlough Experiment (Punitive Policy):* ($r = .53$;

initial scale ranges from 2 [most negative evaluations] to 8). Some states have programs to help prisoners -- many of whom are [black/white] -- adjust to life outside prison by granting them weekend furloughs near the end of their prison terms.

1. Do you strongly approve (1), approve (2), disapprove (3), or strongly disapprove (4) of such programs? (Mean = 2.65). Reflected.
2. In your opinion, how likely is it that prisoners in programs like this will commit more crimes while they're on a weekend furlough?^b (Mean = 2.21 on 4-point scale).

Note: Prior to the analysis, all variables were recoded so that expected relationships yielded positive coefficients and so that the lowest value equals 0 and the highest value equals 1.

^aResponse options were "strongly agree (1), not so strongly agree (2), not so strongly disagree (3), strongly disagree (4)."

^bResponse options were "very likely (1), likely (2), unlikely (3), very unlikely (4)."

Table A.1. Lexington Population and Sample Characteristics

	<u>Lexington Population</u>	<u>Lexington Sample</u>
Gender		
Male	48%	43.6%
Female	52	56.4
Median Income	\$17,941	\$20,000 to \$30,000
Education		
Less than high school	19.8%	7.6%
High school graduate	23.4%	24.9%
Some college	26.2	24.7
Four-year college degree	18.6	23.9
College graduate work	12.0	18.1

Note: Lexington-Fayette County population characteristics are from the 1990 U.S. Census. The Median Income for the Lexington sample refers to the median income category used in the interview. Because the sample over-represents more educated (and affluent) individuals, it was weighted to reflect education levels in the Lexington population. The sample does not include African-Americans, who comprise 13% of the Lexington population because the cost of over-sampling blacks to gain a representative black subsample was prohibitive.

Table A.2. Whites' Ratings of "Most" Blacks

<u>Black Stereotype Item</u>	<u>Mean Rating</u>	<u>%Negative Rating</u>
Hard-working--lazy	3.809	24.7%
Prone to violence--not prone to violence	4.104	30.7
Short-tempered--even-tempered	4.439	20.1
Prefer to be self-supporting --prefer to live off welfare	4.155	41.3
Hostile--friendly	4.491	20.8

Note: Means are based on 7-point scales (see above for question wording). "Negative ratings" on the 7-point scales are those that fall below 4 (or above 4 for the hard-working and self-supporting items) on the 7-point scale. The ratings of "most blacks" here are slightly less negative than those obtained in national surveys where, for example, 31.% of whites rated "most blacks" as "lazy" and 36.5% rated "blacks in general" as "lazy" (versus hardworking) (see Peffley, Hurwitz and Sniderman, 1997, Table 1 and Note 2).

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**Table I. Predicting Approval of Punitive Crime Policies from
Negative Racial Stereotypes**

<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>Approve Punitive Policies</u>	
	Unst.	(se)
<i>Racial Attitudes</i>		
Black Stereotypes	.22**	(.06)
White Stereotypes	-.12	(.07)
<i>Predispositions</i>		
Fear of crime	.12*	(.06)
Conformity	.13**	(.04)
Ideology	.09*	(.04)
Partisanship	.05	(.03)
Knowledge	-.06	(.05)
<i>Demographics</i>		
Age	-.06	(.05)
Gender	.05*	(.02)
Education	.06	(.05)
Constant	.01	(.07)
R ²	.15	
Adj R ²	.13	
N	462	

Note: Entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients (Unst.), with standard errors (se) in parentheses. All variables are coded to a 0 to 1 scale so that expected relationships yield positive coefficients. Specifically, lower values indicate: more approval of punitive policies, negative stereotypes of African-Americans, more fear of crime, more conformity, conservatism, Republican, less knowledge, younger, male, less formal years of education.

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

**Table II. Predicting Approval of Punitive Crime Policies from
Negative Evaluations of Prisoners**

<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>Approve Punitive Policies</u>	
	Unst.	(se)
<i>Racial Attitudes</i>		
Neg. Evaluations of Prisoners	.37**	(.06)
Race* Eval. Prisoners	.25**	(.08)
Race of Inmates (Black = 0)	.10	(.07)
<i>Predispositions</i>		
Fear of crime	.15*	(.06)
Conformity	.14**	(.03)
Ideology	.06	(.04)
Partisanship	.03	(.03)
Knowledge	-.06	(.04)
<i>Demographics</i>		
Age	-.05	(.05)
Gender	.04	(.02)
Education	.06	(.05)
Constant	.05	(.05)
R ²	.21	
Adj R ²	.19	
N	462	

Note: Entries are unstandardized OLS regression coefficients (Unst.), with standard errors (se) in parentheses. All variables are coded to a 0 to 1 scale so that expected relationships yield positive coefficients. Specifically, lower values indicate: more approval of punitive policies, negative evaluations of prisoners, black experimental condition, more fear of crime, more conformity, conservatism, Republican, less knowledge, younger, male, less formal years of education.

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

