

**RACE CODING AND WHITE SUPPORT FOR CRIME SPENDING:
SUBJECTIVE EVALUATIONS, OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS, AND MEDIA INFLUENCES**

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Abstract

Crime is an important issue to many Americans, and as a result, there appears to be a strong public affinity for crime control policies. But is this support based on some underlying animus toward racial minorities? Gilens (1999) might argue that it is. In a series of studies on opposition to welfare, Gilens claims that welfare is a “race-coded” issue in that it evokes negative racial attitudes among whites toward blacks, in turn negatively impacting their opinions on this race-neutral policy. Furthermore, Gilens asserts that the media is responsible for creating negative linkages of blacks with poverty, which has aided in the formation of welfare as a “race-coded” issue. Extending the logic of “race coding” posited by Gilens and others, we examine the role of racial attitudes in the shaping of public support for crime spending policies. Specifically, we consider the role of the news media and of objective characteristics of individuals’ contexts in creating the presumptive bond between racial attitudes and attitudes toward crime spending. Using data from the 1992, 1994 and 1996 American National Election Studies, and supplemented with data from the U.S. Census and the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports, we develop and test a series of models that specifies the linkage between racial attitudes and attitudes toward crime spending, both directly and as mediated by exposure to television news and by the racial and crime contexts within which respondents reside. Surprisingly, we find that racial affect does not play a significant role in support for government spending on crime, though perceiving blacks as violent does. Furthermore, and contrary to expectations, we find that the media exposure and the contextual environment are not significantly related to the magnitude of the relationship between opinions on crime spending and racial attitudes.

Despite recent declines in crime rates in the United States,¹ crime remains a salient issue for many Americans. It is a topic that is frequently linked with race, and several scholars argue that crime has remained a prevalent political issue because it is a “covert” or “symbolic” way of introducing racism into the political process (e.g., Chambliss, 1995; Sears, 1988; Bobo, 1988; Jamieson, 1992; Mendelberg, 1997). Along these same lines is the notion of “race coding.” As defined by Martin Gilens (1996a: 593), “race coding” is a process whereby seemingly race-neutral social issues are considered to be a cue or signal referring to race.” Extending the logic of “race coding” posited by Gilens, some scholars portray crime as a “race-coded” issue in that it evokes certain racial attitudes held by many white Americans about blacks, without explicitly mentioning race (Kinder and Mendelberg, 1995; Gilens, 1996a).²

In a series of works concerning white opposition to welfare, Gilens (1995; 1996a; 1996b; 1998; 1999) addresses this concept of “race coding,” and claims that public attitudes toward minorities play a key role in shaping welfare policy, as well as for many other “race-coded” issues (e.g., crime, immigration, and illegal drugs). Gilens presents evidence that the racial attitudes of whites influence their opinions on welfare spending. Specifically, he finds that whites’ impression of “blacks as lazy” is an important determinant of opposition to welfare spending (1996a: 598; 1999).

Furthermore, Gilens asserts that the media is the primary perpetuator of this problem, insofar as the news media associates blacks with many major social problems. For instance, in his analysis of the portrayal of poverty by the news media,³ Gilens (1999) discovers that African Americans are significantly over-represented in news stories related to poverty, and he posits that this “racialization” of news stories about poverty is responsible for shaping the public’s misperception of the poor as largely consisting of blacks. However, Gilens does admit that he lacks “direct evidence” to support the claim that the media are to blame for these public misjudgments, but contends that “substantial indirect evidence” implies that it “is likely” (Gilens, 1999: 140).

If Gilens’ assertions and empirical findings are indeed correct, these results should have significant implications for other policies that, while seemingly race-neutral, are deemed to be “race-coded.” Considering Gilens’ findings of white opposition for the “race-coded” issue of welfare spending, and considering the possibility that crime is a “race-coded” policy area, the same argument can be applied to citizens’ attitudes toward crime spending. If crime can also be thought of as a “race-coded” issue, white Americans possessing negative affect towards blacks should be more likely to associate blacks with crime and hence support public policies to alleviate the problems of crime. Based on these associations, whites—particularly those who have hostile views toward blacks or who view blacks as part of the crime problem—should logically be more supportive of increased crime spending in order to increase crime control and, presumably, decrease crime. Moreover, in keeping with Gilens’ assertion about the culpability of the media in its negative depictions of blacks, public opinion equating blacks with crime should also be shaped by exposure to the media.

With Gilens’ arguments in mind, we seek to test whether or not crime is a “race-coded” issue that provokes racial attitudes of white Americans, specifically focusing on their feelings toward crime spending. Additionally, the role of the media is studied to determine its function in creating

¹ The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Statistics finds that violent crime rates have declined since 1994, and in 2001 reached their lowest level ever recorded (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/viort.htm>). These findings are based on the National Crime Victimization Survey, which includes information on the following violent crimes: rape, robbery, aggravated and simple assault, and homicide. They also find that property crimes, which include burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft, have also dramatically decreased.

² Additionally, Jamieson (1992) argues that it is a successful tactic commonly used by politicians to galvanize white voters’ stereotypical negative views of blacks without overtly mentioning the “race card.”

³ Gilens first examines three newsmagazines, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report*, from 1950 through 1992, and he also uses the *Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature* to develop a topic index of poverty stories. Using the *Vanderbilt Television News Index and Abstracts*, he then looks at stories appearing on ABC, NBC and CBS nightly news from 1960 through 1992. See Gilens (1999: Chapter 3).

and perpetuating these (presumably) negative linkages of crime with race. We utilize data from the 1992, 1994, and 1996 American National Election Studies (ANES) to test a series of models in which support for increased crime spending is depicted as a function of racial attitudes, media exposure, and a variety of additional (control) variables thought to be related to the dependent variable.

Finally, one thing that has been left out of most previous studies on the subject is the “objective” environment within which individuals reside. When white individuals link their attitudes toward blacks and their attitudes toward crime spending, the linkage could reflect irrational prejudice or racial animus. On the other hand, it is also possible that at least a part of that linkage is due to “objective” conditions in their environment, insofar as crime is linked with blacks in their immediate context. In environments where black crime rates far exceed white crime rates, it is possible that the linkage between attitudes toward blacks and attitudes toward crime spending represents a concern about the source of “objective” crime conditions. This is a very difficult process to disentangle, and adequate data on objective crime conditions is difficult to obtain. In this paper we make an exploratory attempt to disentangle these processes.

SUBJECTIVE EVALUATIONS, OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS, AND MEDIA INFLUENCES

Today in the United States, it is widely recognized that that the percentage of racial minorities convicted of crimes is higher than the percentage of racial minorities in the general population. For instance, Chambliss (1995) reports that African Americans constitute roughly 50% of the prison population, while they represent only 13% of the total U.S. population.⁴ The U.S. Department of Justice also reveals that “63% of jail inmates belonged to racial or ethnic minorities in 1996,” and that the lifetime chances of going to prison are higher for blacks (16.2%) and Hispanics (9.4%) than for whites (2.5%).⁵ Furthermore, LaFree (1995) finds in his study of crime rates from 1946 to 1990 that black crime rates have been significantly higher than those of whites. However, these over-representations in the criminal justice system are only one facet of a more complex issue; therefore, it is important to attempt to understand what it is that links crime and race together in the public mind and how crime has come to be known as a “race-coded” issue.

Subjective Evaluations: Perceptions of Race and Crime.

A substantial amount of scholarly research has been conducted regarding the effects of race in the development of the public’s perception of crime. One school of thought suggests that negative public opinion of crime is merely a form of cloaked racism (see, e.g., Jamieson, 1992; Kinder and Mendelberg, 1995; Chambliss, 1995; Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman, 1997). Regarding this idea, Sniderman and Piazza (1993: 38-39) note that racism is “no longer blatant: people nowadays are reluctant to express openly their dislike of and contempt for blacks,” so it must be “subtle” and “disguised, kept out of sight.”

Several scholars also refer to this type of covert racism as “symbolic” (Sears, 1988; Bobo, 1988; Sears et al., 1997).⁶ Bobo (1988: 103) defines symbolic racism⁷ as a type of “socialization to negative feelings toward blacks [that] merges with other basic values to form psychological resistance to contemporary proposals beneficial to blacks as a group.” Sears (1988) adds that

⁴ See Table 11.2 (239).

⁵ This information was obtained from the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Statistics at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/crimoff.htm#lifetime>.

⁶ This type of racism is also referred to as “new racism” (see Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000) or “modern racism” (see Entman, 1992), as opposed to “old fashioned racism,” which entails “open bigotry” and an overall belief of whites that blacks are innately inferior (see Sears, 1988).

⁷ Bobo notes that this concept is derived from Kinder and Sears’ (1981) definition, which defines symbolic racism as “a blend of antiblack affect and the kind of traditional American moral values embodied in the Protestant Ethic. Symbolic racism represents a form of resistance to change in the racial status quo based on moral feelings that blacks violate such traditional American values as individualism and self-reliance, the work ethic, obedience, and discipline.”

symbolic racism is a mixture of “antiblack feeling” and “traditional values,” which is much less blatant than the open bigotry of “old-fashioned racism.” He also posits three different propositions pertaining to the effects of symbolic racism, which include the following: (1) symbolic racism has a significant effect on voting behavior and policy preferences; (2) its political impact is stronger than the political effects of old-fashioned racism; and (3) its influence is stronger than “direct personal racial threat” (i.e. short term self-interest).

Testing this first proposition of “symbolic racism,” Sears et al. (1997) study the effects of racism on policy and candidate preferences. Using five different measures of racism (e.g., symbolic racism, black affect, stereotypes, old-fashioned racism and white affect) to determine its effect on the origin of white opposition to racial policies such as Equal Opportunity, Federal Assistance, and Affirmative Action,⁸ they find that symbolic racism is the strongest determinant of opposition to these policies. In looking at presidential candidates, the authors also find that symbolic racism negatively influences white voters’ evaluations of black candidates (e.g., Jesse Jackson), as well as of white candidates who are politically connected to African Americans (Sears et al., 1997: 39-41).

In this same vein, the practice of racial stereotyping is another explanation of how crime becomes so closely associated with race. Perhaps the most commonly cited definition of stereotypes is Lippmann’s (1922) “pictures in the head,” which refers to the way in which individuals process or simplify complex or ambiguous information from the world around them (Rothbart and John, 1993). This simplification process commonly occurs vis-à-vis race when the characteristics of some members within a particular race are attributed to all of the members of that race; however, Gilens (1999: 7) argues that stereotypes are often “exaggerated or wholly erroneous generalizations about specific social groups.”⁹

With regard to these false generalizations, Gilens suggests that the negative stereotyping of some blacks as “lazy” or “violent” often translates into the characterization of welfare and crime as largely “black” social problems. He further argues that these particular negative stereotypes of blacks can have serious consequences in terms of public opinion on governmental policies. For instance, he finds that Americans who view blacks as “lazy” are more likely to support cuts in welfare spending (1998; 1999).

Other studies have achieved similar results. In a study of racial stereotyping, Hurwitz, Peffley, and Sniderman (1997) and Peffley and Hurwitz (1998) investigate the relationship between racial attitudes and individuals’ assessments of welfare and crime policies. Both studies posit that whites who typically stereotype blacks as “lazy” or “violent” are more likely to oppose welfare and support “get tough” crime policies, particularly when these policies target blacks. Moreover, Peffley and Hurwitz (1998: 90) report that “from a third to half of the white population now views ‘most’ blacks as ‘lazy’ and ‘violent’.” Through a series of experiments, Hurwitz et al. find that whites’ support of welfare and criminal justice is “heavily colored” by racial stereotypes and that whites embrace their stereotypes about blacks in evaluating these policies. Whites with racial stereotypes that depict blacks as “lazy” and lacking in work ethic are less likely to support welfare. In addition, they are more likely to support crime control when they perceive of blacks as “aggressive” or “violent,” poorly dressed, and misbehaved (1997: 45-49; 1998: 87).

Hurwitz and Peffley (1997: 384) similarly examine the racial attitudes of whites in an attempt to determine whether or not their judgments of crime are, in fact, based on stereotypes. Through a series of experimental surveys they examine attitudes towards various crimes and find that when whites are presented with a crime that concurs with “the racial ‘picture in their head,’” their stereotypes of blacks (e.g., African Americans are “violent” and “lazy”) strongly determine their judgment of the crime (i.e., guilty, or more likely to commit a similar crime in the future).

⁸ See Tables 1-3 (28-30).

⁹ An example of an “exaggerated” and “erroneous generalization” is the public’s misperception of the poor population. Gilens (1999: 102) argues that on average, Americans think that blacks make up 50% of all poor people, when they really only compose 27% of the poor.

Carmines and Layman (1998) test the impact of prejudice on political parties in relation to their racial policy preferences. They find that Republicans remain staunch in their support for a limited national government (i.e., less governmental spending), whatever their level of prejudice. They also discover that prejudice is most influential on white Democrats. In reference to this finding, the authors note, “Unlike the attitudes of nonprejudiced Republicans, the attitudes these [prejudiced] Democrats hold toward blacks are translated directly into racial policy preferences, into opposition to government efforts to overcome racial inequality” (1998: 129).

On the whole, these various findings suggest that “symbolic” racial attitudes and racial stereotyping of blacks play a significant role in the “race coding” of crime, though there may be variation across individuals in who is most responsive to racial attitudes and racial stereotyping. So how are racial attitudes and stereotypes formed? Some scholars suggest that it is the contextual environments—or the objective conditions—that are possible contributors to these formations (Kinder and Mendelberg, 1995; Rothbart and John, 1993).

Objective Conditions: Racial composition and crime rates.

The contextual environment is one possible link of racial attitudes to crime. For instance, in a study combining both 1972 ANES and county-level Census data, Giles (1977: 415) found that negative racial attitudes are linked to higher concentrations of blacks. In particular, he found this relationship to be “conditioned by region” in that Southerners were more likely to possess negative affect towards blacks as the percentage of blacks increased within their home counties. Similarly, Taylor (1998: 531) finds in her study of the 1990 General Social Survey (GSS) and metropolitan area Census data that higher concentrations of African Americans evoke negative racial attitudes of whites, particularly in terms of “traditional prejudice,” “opposition to race-targeting” and “policy related beliefs.”

Other studies of racial proximity, however, have found more mixed results. Kinder and Mendelberg (1995) study the effects of prejudice and racial isolation insofar as how they influence whites’ support for various racial policies. Using GSS data, they discover that prejudice among segregated whites “considerably” affects support for the several racial policy “domains,” including segregation, general federal assistance, individualistic remedies, and implicit racial policies (1995: 416).¹⁰ On the other hand, they conclude that increased racial proximity tends to curtail the effects of prejudice, and opposition to three of the four policy domains decreases as a result.¹¹

Oliver and Mendelberg (2000) test the “threat” hypothesis, which asserts that racial tensions are a result of the percentage of blacks within a community. Utilizing the National Race and Politics Study, they examine the effects of racial attitudes in both zip code and metro area levels. They find little evidence to support the notion that white racial attitudes are linked to the size of the black population at the zip code level. At the metro area level, this relationship is more moderate, but is “weaker” and “inconsistent” than previous research has suggested (2000: 587). Rather, it is the socioeconomic conditions of the environment that are the most powerful predictors of racial attitudes—whites with lower education environments are those most likely to possess negative affect towards blacks.

Giles and Evan (1985) and Metelko (2002) similarly test the racial “threat” hypothesis. Combining 1972 ANES and Census county level contextual data, Giles and Evans (1985) found that the concentration of blacks only affected “black threat” among whites possessing low levels of political efficacy. Testing the census tract, county, and metropolitan area contextual levels, Metelko

¹⁰ See Table 4 for a list of these findings (415).

¹¹ Racial proximity positively affects opinions on segregation, general federal assistance, and implicit racial policies; individualistic remedies are not affected.

(2002) finds that whites living in low socioeconomic and high black concentrated areas possess higher levels of prejudice towards blacks at the county and metropolitan area levels.

While these various findings emphasize the significance of objective conditions on racial attitudes, other scholars argue that it is the media's excessive and inaccurate portrayal of blacks that is responsible for the formation of "race coded" issues (e.g., Colfax and Sternberg, 1972; Iyengar, 1987; Jamieson, 1992; Gaubatz, 1995; Hurtwitz and Peffley, 1997; Peffley, Hurtwitz, and Sniderman, 1999).

One other contextual variable that can have an effect on the race coding of crime policy preferences is the actual crime rate in individuals' local communities or neighborhoods. Unfortunately, this variable has not been a feature in most studies of public attitudes toward crime. Moreover, one might argue that a study of the racialization of attitudes toward crime should include some measure of racial disparities in crime rates within individuals' immediate contexts. Such data are difficult to obtain, so there has been very little effort to link racialized crime rates (if they exist) and racialized attitudes toward crime.

Media Influences.

Several studies examine the role of the media in linking blacks to particular social issues. As previously mentioned, Gilens (1996b; 1999) proposes that the media is the link between negative attitudes towards blacks and poverty programs, because it often over-represents in its news stories the number of minorities receiving welfare benefits. With regard to this overrepresentation, Gilens (1996b: 516) states, "Media distortions of social conditions are...likely to result in public misperceptions that reinforce existing biases and stereotypes." Considering this statement, it is possible that the media has some potential for shaping public opinion of crime.¹²

Perhaps the most familiar example of the media linkage of race to crime is the infamous Willie Horton ad, which ran during the 1988 Bush vs. Dukakis presidential campaigns.¹³ This ad pictured a black-and-white photo of Willie Horton, a black man who had been convicted of murder in Dukakis' home state of Massachusetts (Mendelberg, 1997; Jamieson, 1992). Sentenced to life without parole, Horton was released on a weekend furlough from which he escaped and went on to kidnap and brutally assault a white couple. This advertisement was used to characterize Dukakis as being "soft on crime," as it proclaimed that Dukakis "vetoed the death penalty" and "allowed murderers to have weekend passes" (Jamieson, 1992).

However, Jamieson claims that it was not coincidental that a black man was chosen to represent the furlough system in Massachusetts, but rather Horton was used to reinforce "the mistaken assumption that violent crime is disproportionately committed by blacks, disproportionately committed by black perpetrators against white victims, and disproportionately the activity of black males against white females" (1992: 133). In an experimental design study of the Horton advertisement, Mendelberg (1997: 151) finds support for Jamieson's claims of race baiting by the Republicans. She finds that the Horton appeal was certainly "about race rather than crime," and that it was much more successful in activating white voters' racial prejudices, rather than their fears of crime in the 1988 election campaign (also see Bobo, 1997).¹⁴

Many other researchers have also studied the effects of media on racial attitudes. For instance, Entman (1992) performed a content analysis of local television news programming in Chicago to

¹² A number of scholars would agree that, similar to welfare, blacks are overrepresented in crime stories as well (e.g., Jamieson, 1992; Entman, 1992; Entman, 1994; Hurtwitz and Peffley, 1997; Peffley, Hurtwitz, and Sniderman, 1999).

¹³ The National Security Political Action Committee (NSPAC) sponsored these ads, but Bush frequently referred to them in his campaign (e.g., in stump and campaign speeches) against Dukakis (Jamieson, 1992: 17-23).

¹⁴ Mendelberg also looks at the effects of the Horton story on whites' opinion of welfare. She finds that after viewing the ads, whites were less likely to support welfare programs and more likely to feel that African Americans should do without them.

determine whether it demoralizes racist attitudes among whites or whether it strengthens “modern racism.” He finds that televised images of blacks accused of violent crimes differ from those of whites accused: blacks are less likely to be named; less likely to be shown in motion; more likely to be shown dressed poorly; and more likely to be shown physically grasped by police in news stories. Therefore, Entman argues, these differences are “likely to stimulate negative emotions toward blacks among white audiences” (1992: 353).

After finding the local media’s contribution in linking blacks to crime issues, Entman (1994) conducted a study of networks—ABC, NBC and CBS—to examine the portrayal of African Americans in national news programs. He finds that the network news programs paint both positive and negative portraits of blacks. On the positive side, blacks are shown in “human interest” stories that depict blacks in an “upbeat” manner that is irrespective of race; also, black experts appear on stories relating to both black and non-black issues. However, blacks are negatively portrayed, given that they are more likely to appear in stories about violence and drugs, being physically grasped by police and are given less “pro-defense sound bites” than whites accused of crimes (512-3). As a result, Entman claims that network news generate more “subtle” images of blacks that evoke racial hostility of whites toward blacks.

Similar to Entman’s (1992) study of local television news, Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) examine “the crime story as a narrative script,” in an experiment conducted to test the effects of media on racial attitudes. They contend that local news coverage of crime follows a standard script that generally involves “crime is violent” and “the presence of a particular suspect.” By manipulating the race of the perpetrator in a series of crime script experiments, they find that when white subjects are exposed to a crime script with no face or a black face, “new racism” (also referred to as “symbolic racism,” see above) is strengthened and “subtle racial attitudes” about crime and race are activated (1992: 567-70). Further, white frequent local news viewers are more likely to support “punitive crime policies,” as well as “express negative beliefs” about African-Americans (2000: 571).

Valentino (1999) also looks at local crime news, but focuses on its ability to prime racial attitudes in presidential evaluations. Using an experimental design, he finds that crime coverage is related to candidate support in the 1996 presidential election. Valentino’s theory that Republicans “own” the crime issue is supported, since subjects who were exposed to crime news involving minority suspects were more likely to support the Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole over the Democratic candidate Bill Clinton. Thus, Valentino concludes that local crime coverage is capable of affecting the salience of crime issues in the political process.

Similarly, Valentino, Hutchings and White (2002) examine the priming of racial attitudes in political ads of the 2000 presidential campaign. In a series of experimental ads that test the effect of subtle racial cues, they not only find that government spending and taxation are “race coded,” but that black portrayals in these ads are “powerful” racial primes.

The majority of research therefore suggests that the public perception or subjective evaluation of crime is that it is a “black” social problem, making this race-neutral issue into a “race-coded” one. Many studies have demonstrated that the media is at least partially responsible for facilitating negative stereotypes of blacks through often misleading and inaccurate news stories. Though there has been much research conducted concerning public opinion of crime and the effects of the media’s portrayal of crime, there have been no studies that have tested Gilens’ proposition that “race coding” is responsible for positively affecting public opinion of crime control policies. This study attempts to fill that void.

With the use of data obtained from the American National Elections Study, we explore the degree to which racial attitudes play a significant role in shaping individuals’ support for government spending on crime, as well as to identify the role the media plays in accentuating the linkage between race and crime. Moreover, we propose to go beyond previous studies by incorporating data on county-level crime rates in order to evaluate whether or not the perceptions of crime rates

accurately correspond to the objective conditions—actual crime rates, racial composition, and the combination of the two—in the respondents' community.

DATA, METHODS, AND PROCEDURES

In this study we utilize data from the 1992, 1994 and 1996 American National Election Survey (ANES), which is a national study carried out by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan. The ANES biennially surveys a large sample of Americans on a variety of different issues both before and after each national election. Some of the issues addressed in this survey include evaluations and perceptions of the presidential candidates and their parties, political values and attitudes, detailed demographics, and opinions on other assorted issues such as social welfare, civil rights and economics. Because the ANES provides individual level data about these issues, it proves useful in evaluating the opinions of Americans in terms of crime, race, crime spending and media usage.

Population data obtained from the United States Census' *USA Counties 1998* and crime data obtained from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report (UCR)¹⁵ are also used to evaluate the racial composition and crime rates of the respondents' community at the county level. Because the ANES provides the FIPS county codes for each respondent, we are able to add the corresponding black populations, as well as the number of "index crimes"¹⁶ to each case.

We estimate several statistical models that depict respondents' preferences on crime spending as a function of racial attitudes, media usage, "objective" variables such as county racial composition and county crime rate, and a number of political and socioeconomic control variables. Moreover, we estimate additional models to include interaction variables for racial attitudes and media exposure, as well as interaction variables for racial attitudes, racial composition, and crime rates. Our primary concern is to ascertain the degree to which respondents' attitudes toward blacks are translated into their attitudes toward crime spending, as well as to explore how this linkage varies as a function of individuals' exposure to news media and the racial and crime characteristics in their home communities. A brief summary of the variables used in our analysis can be found in Appendix 1. Further, it should be noted that these models are estimated using only the white respondents from the ANES surveys. Gilens' notion of "race coding" presupposes that it is the racist attitudes of *whites towards blacks* that shape opposition to welfare; *prima facie*, we focus only on the opinions of white respondents.¹⁷

Dependent variable: Support for crime spending. To capture support for crime policies, the dependent variable used in the analyses is derived from a question that asks the respondents whether or not they feel crime spending should be increased, decreased, kept about the same or cut out entirely. The measure of attitudes toward crime spending is coded on a three-point scale as follows: -1 = crime spending should be decreased or cut out entirely; 0 = crime spending should be kept about the same; 1 = crime spending should be increased. Ordered logit analysis is utilized in the estimation of the models, since this technique is appropriate for dependent variables coded on a trichotomous ordered scale.

¹⁵ These data are collected yearly by the ICPSR, and the study numbers for 1994 and 1996 are 6669 and 2389, respectively. The 1992 data were obtained from *USA Counties 1998*, which also reports the FBI's UCR. See the Census' *Fedstats* for further information regarding the compilation of crime data, or for a list of crime definitions see: <http://www.fedstats.gov/mapstats/definition.html>.

¹⁶ The UCR includes the number of "index crimes" reported to the police. Part I offenses within the index include murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, auto theft and arson. Part II offenses include forgery, fraud, embezzlement, vandalism, weapons violations, sex offenses, drug and alcohol abuse violations, gambling, vagrancy, curfew violations and runaways.

¹⁷ However, it is also plausible that black respondents may hold many of the same opinions as white respondents in terms of linking blacks with crime and support for crime control (Wilson and Dunham, 2001). The survey data, however, do not possess a large enough sample of black respondents (1992, 12.8%; 1994, 11.3%; 1996, 12.1%) to accurately assess this possibility. For further discussion on the exclusion of blacks in studies of racial affect, see Valentino, Hutchings and White (2002: 78).

Independent variable: Racial attitudes. The core independent variables—racial affect towards blacks, racial composition, crime rates, and media usage—provide the most important elements of the study. Racial attitudes are measured in each of the three election studies through the use of a black feeling thermometer item (e.g., Sears et al., 1997: 26; Corey and Garand, 2000). Respondents are asked to rate how they feel about blacks on a scale ranging from 0 (feel unfavorable or cold) to 100 (feel favorable or warm), with 50 serving as the neutral point. If crime is a race-coded issue, we would expect racial attitudes towards blacks to be inversely related to crime spending, so that as affect toward blacks decreases, support for crime spending increases.

The 1992 ANES also presents us with a unique opportunity to extract an alternative measure of racial attitudes. This survey asks the respondents to rank their opinions of blacks on a seven-point scale ranging from “violent” to “peaceful.”¹⁸ Found throughout the literature, racial stereotyping of blacks as “violent” often translates into support for crime control.¹⁹ An inverse relationship is again expected between this measure and crime spending, meaning that as whites possess more negative stereotypes of blacks (i.e., “blacks are violent”), they will more likely support increased crime spending.

Independent variable: Contextual variables. We include in our model three variables that reflect the contextual character of respondents’ home counties. Racial composition consists of the percentage of blacks within each respondent’s home county, as determined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Ideally, one would want to have data on a variety of individual contexts (e.g., neighborhood, census tract, zip code, county, etc.). Arguably, racial contexts are multi-layered, with levels close to the individual likely to have the greatest impact on political attitudes and perceptions. Unfortunately, geocodes for geographic contexts lower than the level of the county are not available in the public-use version of the ANES data sets, so it is necessary to rely on the county as the analytical unit for individuals’ contexts. Moreover, crime rates, or “serious crimes known to police,” are available at the county level and are measured per 100,000 population to take into account different population sizes for the counties from which our respondents are selected.

Ideally, one would like to have data on crime rates broken down by the race of the perpetrator, but unfortunately such data are not readily available across all states and counties. It is possible to use the racial composition of arrests, but here again these data are available only in limited jurisdictions. Because the racial breakdown of offenses is not available at the county level, we make an effort to come up with a rough surrogate measure that takes into account information on both the racial composition and crime rates characterizing individuals’ home counties. Simply, we multiply county racial composition and county crime rates together, creating a variable that takes on its highest values when both black population and crime rates are at their highest. Admittedly, this measure does not capture directly the crime rates for black, white, and other race perpetrators. However, we do believe that this measure is related to the concept of interest. Moreover, we suspect that white respondents are unlikely to know precisely the black crime rate; rather, we suspect that white respondents who live in counties with high crime rates and high black populations are likely to perceive—correctly or not—that crime is a black phenomenon in their community.

We anticipate that as the proportion of blacks and black related crime increase jointly, support for crime control will increase as well. In other words, if white respondents see crime in race-coded terms, and if white respondents live in areas with both high crime rates and large black populations, we would expect to see a higher level of support for crime spending.

Independent variable: Television news exposure. We also consider the effects of television news coverage. Exposure to television news serves as a measure of media usage for the three

¹⁸ See Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of the various variable measurements.

¹⁹ For instance, Hurwitz and Peffley (1997: 382) claim that both black racial stereotypes—laziness and violence—are used in the assessment of stereotyping of African Americans, because it does the following: (1) “captures contemporary white resentment toward blacks; and (2) “are particularly relevant to whites’ political judgments of crime.”

years of analysis and is measured by the number of days television news is watched per week as reported by the respondent.²⁰

It is important to note that our measure of television news exposure does not include a content analysis that reflects the crime coverage to which respondents are exposed. Ideally, we would want to have a direct measure of exposure to racialized crime coverage. Unfortunately, such data would be nearly impossible to obtain. Moreover, researchers such as Entmen (1994) claim evidence that national television news portrays black Americans in a way that reinforces white perceptions of blacks, and further that the national television news networks each contribute to these perceptions. We suggest that television news exposure is likely to include at least some racialized news coverage, and that individuals who see television news more than others will likely see more racialized news than others. Given this, we include television news exposure in our model and make the assumption that this variable captures to at least some extent the degree to which respondents are exposed to racialized news coverage.

Ultimately, we posit that media usage will have a positive relationship on crime spending. Respondents with high media usage will be most likely to be exposed to negative portrayals of blacks in the media, particularly in the area of crime. As a result, they will be more likely to link crime with race and consequently support increases in crime spending.

Independent variables: Interaction effects. We suggest that television news exposure and the racial-crime configuration of individuals' local contexts will have a direct effect on support for increased crime spending. We hypothesize that white citizens exposed to the black-crime linkage through television viewership or through living in a county with both large black populations and a high crime rate will be more likely to support increased crime spending. But we also suggest that these two variables will have a less direct, but nonetheless important, effect on attitudes toward crime spending. Specifically, we suggest that anything that links crime and race in the minds of citizens will enhance the relationship between individuals' racial attitudes and their views toward anti-crime policies, including spending on crime.

For example, we posit that the relationship between attitudes toward black and attitudes toward crime spending should be strongest for respondents residing in counties with high black crime rates. Such high black crime rates can create a context in which race-coding is more likely to occur, so the linkage between racial attitudes and support for crime spending should be even stronger in such contexts than in those in which race and crime are not connected in the same explicit way. Given this, we create an interaction variable for our black feeling thermometer variable and our proxy for black crime rates. If our hypothesis is correct, we would expect the coefficient for the interaction variable to be negative, indicating that the expected inverse relationship between attitudes toward blacks and attitudes toward crime spending should strengthen as the racialization of crime rates occurs in the minds of respondents.

An interaction variable is also used to determine the effect of media usage on the linkage between black affect and attitudes toward crime. This interaction is created between black feeling thermometers and news viewership (i.e., black affect * news) in order to gauge the strength of the relationship between black affect and crime spending as media usage varies. A negative coefficient is expected for this variable, which implies that as media usage increases, the association between black affect and crime spending is strengthened and becomes even more negative. In other words, when white respondents are consistently exposed to negative depictions of blacks in the media (i.e. high media usage), their attitudes towards blacks become more closely linked to crime spending, as suggested by these media portrayals. As a result,

²⁰ The 1996 ANES allows us additionally to employ slightly different measures of media usage—both local and national news viewership. Because there appears to be a distinction between local and network news throughout the literature, our study also follows in this regard, using both forms of viewership as a measure of media. However, after conducting an analysis utilizing these two different measures, we find no statistically significant differences among these measures and television news viewership. Therefore, television news viewership is used to maintain consistency of the measures among the different years in our final reported analyses.

respondents are both more likely to support increases in crime spending and to link racial attitudes to support for crime spending.

Independent variables: Control variables. A variety of control variables are needed to accurately assess the true relationships between racial attitudes, media usage and crime spending (see Gilens, 1999). These controls include education, family income, age, gender, home ownership and marital status. Several scholars have suggested that education attainment decreases racial animosity (Sears et al., 1997; Sniderman and Piazza, 1993; Kinder and Mendelberg, 1995). For this reason, and assuming that race coding occurs and partly explains attitudes toward crime spending, education is posited to have an inverse relationship with crime spending; hence those with higher education levels will be less likely to support crime spending. Moreover, based on the findings of Gilliam and Iyengar (2000), Wilson and Dunham (2001) and Metelko (2002), higher income, older and female respondents are expected to be those most likely to support increases in crime spending.²¹ Given this, we include measures of income, age, and gender in our model.

In addition, we anticipate that home ownership and marital status will be positively related to support for crime spending. Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) find a significant relationship between home ownership and punitive remedies to crime. According to Gilens (1999) and Corey and Garand (2000), married couples are more conservative and have higher incomes. Based on these various findings, we predict respondents who are married and/or homeowners will be more likely to support increases in crime spending as well.

Political attitudes are also important to consider. Many scholars find that political ideology is significantly related to attitudes toward crime control (e.g., Valentino, 1999; Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000). Moreover, Chambliss (1995) reports that the political agenda of conservatives has led to dramatic increases in crime expenditures. For these reasons, both political ideology and partisan identification are included in our models. Political ideology is measured as a seven-point scale, ranging from 0 (strong liberal) to 6 (strong conservative). Partisan identification is also measured on a seven-point scale, ranging from 0 (strong Democrat) to 6 (strong Republican). We expect positive relationships between political attitudes and crime spending, whereby conservatives and Republicans will be those most likely to support increases in crime spending.

Relatedly, measures of pro-government, political efficacy and political trust are included as well. A pro-government scale is created to measure the respondents' attitudes toward government in general, and in particular, captures support for government activity over the private-sector or free-market activity.²² Our argument is that citizens who support an active government and who are less supportive of private-sector or free-market solutions to policy problems are more likely to see crime spending as a necessity (or perhaps even an *obligation* of government) and will be more likely to support increased crime spending, controlling for the effects of other variables. Political efficacy is defined as the degree to which individuals feel that their actions can significantly affect the political system. We expect that high levels of efficacy will yield more positive attitudes toward crime policies, since individuals believe that they have the potential to impact crime within their particular environments. Lastly, we include a measure of political trust; we expect that those who have high levels of trust in the government will be more likely to support greater crime spending, since they trust government and, presumably, governmental policies. Specifically, we expect that confidence in governmental allocation of resources will lead to support for higher levels of spending on policies such as crime. The measurement of each of these variables is included in Appendix 1.

In summary we propose the use of several measures to test a model of the relationship between racial attitudes and support for crime spending. If Gilens' theory of "race coding" holds, significant inverse relationships should be found between black affect and crime spending

²¹ Gilliam and Iyengar find that whites with incomes of over \$50,000 are significantly more likely to support punitive remedies. In contrast, Wilson and Dunham's findings indicate that those with lower incomes are more likely to support increases in crime spending; however, their findings are not significant.

²² A measure of pro-government is not available for the 1994 analysis.

support. We expect media usage to be the link in this overall relationship, creating the perception that crime is related to race. Finally, in order to test this subjective evaluation of crime, we combine racial composition and crime rates at the county level to create a proxy measure of objective conditions relating to race and crime. We anticipate that even after controlling for the respondents' objective conditions, support for crime policies will still be related to racial attitudes.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Core Models

In Table 1 we report the ordered logit estimates for the 1992, 1994 and 1996 baseline models of support for crime spending. In these models we depict support for crime spending as a function of black affect, media usage, the various contextual variables, and control variables. From the outset the empirical results provide us with a surprise. These results indicate that attitudes towards blacks have no consistent, significant negative effects on support for crime spending. In fact, the coefficient for black affect in the 1992 analysis is in an unexpected *positive* direction, which suggests that as attitudes toward blacks become more positive, support for crime spending *increases* as a result. Overall, it is difficult to view the results from Table 1 and conclude that respondents' affect toward blacks has the negative effect on attitudes toward crime spending that one would expect from a theoretical perspective that sees crime spending as a race-coded attitude. Rather, individuals do not appear to consider race affect in determining their support for (or opposition to) increased crime spending.

We also find only mixed support for expectations in the coefficients for our objective contextual variables. For one thing, the coefficient for objective crime rate is positive, but nonsignificant; white respondents who live in high-crime counties are neither more nor less likely to support increased crime spending. For another, the coefficient for black population percentage is positive and statistically significant ($b = 0.035$, $t = 2.13$), indicating that white respondents who reside in counties with large black populations are more likely to support increased crime spending. In one sense, this is consistent with implications that one might draw from the symbolic politics tradition—i.e., when whites face a large black population, they perceive a greater crime threat and support increased crime spending accordingly. The problem here is that we control for crime rates, so the coefficient for black population cannot be due to any objective increase in crime rates associated with black population. This might lead one to the conclusion that respondents are responding more to blacks than to crime.

But also of interest is the coefficient for the black crime variable (i.e., black population * crime rate). This variable is designed to capture the joint effects of high crime rates and large black populations, and one might expect that support for crime spending would be highest among white respondents residing in counties with high crime and large black populations, so one would expect this coefficient to be positive. However, in all three election years the coefficient for this variable is actually *negative*; in 1992 the negative coefficient is significant at only the most relaxed levels in a one-tailed test, in 1994 this coefficient is negative and significant ($b = -0.756$, $t = -3.26$), and in 1996 the coefficient does not approach conventional levels of statistical significance. Regardless of which year is used to make inferences about this relationship, it does not appear, as one would expect, that crime rates are given greater leverage over respondents crime spending attitudes when the crime rates are accompanied by a context that includes a large black population. To the contrary, it would appear that, if anything, crime has a *smaller* effect on crime spending attitudes in counties with a large black population. This finding suggests that perhaps objective conditions, much like subjective evaluations, are unsuccessful determinants of support for increased crime spending. Consequently, this particular configuration of results, combined with the null effect of black affect, does not bode well for Gilens' extension of "race coding" to crime.

While the initial findings of racial affect and its correspondence to crime policy do not seem to coincide with Gilens' "race coding" thesis, media usage, as well as several of the control variables

within the models, do seem to have significant effects on crime spending support. Regarding the effects of media, television viewership appears to have a significant positive effect on support for crime spending for both the 1992 and 1994 analyses, though the effect is not significant in the 1996 model. For 1992 and 1994, though, the positive coefficient is consistent with simple expectations derived from a race-coding model. While we do not have direct content measures of what respondents saw when they were exposed to the news media, previous findings about the racial content of national news broadcasts are suggestive in terms of how the television news coefficient should be interpreted.

Among the political attitudes variables, political ideology and pro-government attitudes appear to be significant and in the expected direction in the 1992 and 1996 models, indicating that respondents possessing conservative ideologies and positive attitudes toward governmental spending are also those most likely to support spending on crime policies. The coefficient for party identification is significant only in the 1996 model, revealing that in this election those who identify with the Republican party are more likely to support increased crime spending.

Perhaps the most interesting story in the socioeconomic-demographic variables is that education consistently emerges as a significant predictor of crime spending attitudes in all three models. In each election the education coefficients are in the expected negative direction and highly significant, suggesting that those with high levels of education are least likely to support increased crime spending, controlling for the effects of other variables in the model. For the remaining demographic-socioeconomic variables, the results are more mixed. The coefficients for age and gender are statistically significant in the 1992 and 1994 models, which reveals that female and younger respondents are those most likely to support increases in crime spending. Family income also has a significant (positive) effect on support for crime spending in 1992 (though barely significant in a one-tailed test and with a relaxed .10 level of significance) and 1994, but not 1996. The coefficients for home ownership and marital status are nonsignificant for the most part, with marital status in 1996 the sole exception.

Full (Interaction) Models

The null findings for the black affect variable, reported for each election year in Table 1, are somewhat surprising, but it is possible that the patterns that we expected to observe apply only to subsets of the sample. Specifically, we suggest that there may be a media effect, whereby respondents who are exposed the most to television news (and, presumably, the disparate racial coverage of crime) are most likely to connect racial attitudes and attitudes toward crime spending. In addition, we speculate that there may be a contextual effect, whereby individuals residing in counties with large black populations *and* high crime rates are more likely to connect race and crime and hence translate their racial attitudes into attitudes toward crime spending.

In order to test further the effects of media usage and the contextual environments of the respondents, we expand the analysis to include the interaction effects for (1) black affect and television news exposure and (2) black affect and black crime context. The results are reported in Table 2, in which we depict support for crime spending as a function of black affect, media usage, and the interaction, contextual, and control variables.

Once again, the results are not consistent with expectations. The coefficient for black affect fails to approach conventional levels of statistical significance in 1994 and 1996, and the one year where the coefficient does achieve some level of statistical significance it is in the unexpected positive direction! Because this is an interaction model, the coefficient for black affect represents the effect of black feeling thermometers when the television news exposure and black crime are equal to 0—i.e., among those who do not view television news and who reside in counties with a crime rate equal to 0 and a nonexistent black population.

The coefficients for the interaction variable for black crime and black affect are inconsistent in direction and fail to achieve statistical significance in all three election years. It would appear that residing in a county with a large black population and high crime rate does not racialize whites' attitudes toward crime and cause a shift in how evaluations of blacks are translated into support for crime spending.

On the other hand, the coefficients for the interaction for black feeling thermometer and television news are actually in the expected (negative) direction in two of three elections, and the coefficients are at the borderline of statistical significance at the less stringent .10 level in a one-tailed test. This is not overwhelming evidence in favor of our expectations, but it could be at least suggestive except for the fact that the black feeling thermometer is in the unexpected positive direction in both 1992 and 1996, and significantly so in 1992. We had speculated that the relationship between black affect and attitudes toward crime spending would be negative, and that the relationship would be made *more* negative with higher levels of television viewership and, presumably, exposure to racialized stories about crime. What we find in 1992 is that increases in black affect *increases* support for crime spending, and so the negative coefficient for the interaction between black affect and television news merely reduces the magnitude of the positive effect. For 1996 the positive coefficient for black affect is small and near a value of 0, so the coefficient for the interaction has less heavy lifting to do, but the small magnitude of the interaction coefficient still leaves us skeptical of its effects.

The relationship between crime spending and media usage appears again in the 1992 and 1994 analyses, indicating that television viewership is positively related to support. Here again, this is in keeping with the notion that television coverage of crime has a racial component that gets translated into stronger support for crime spending. Regarding the contextual variables, it is clear that 1994 stands out as being different than 1992 and 1996. In 1994, respondents' support for increased crime spending is enhanced as a function of both black population and the overall crime rate, suggesting that individuals respond to the racial composition and crime contexts of their home counties. Moreover, the coefficient for "black crime" is negative, to our surprise indicating that the effect of crime rates on attitudes toward crime spending *declines* (and not increases, as we would expect) as the black population of their home county increases. For 1992 and 1996 the coefficient for the racial composition variable is both positive and significant, but the coefficients for crime rate and "black crime" are not significant, indicating that respondents respond to the racial composition of their home counties but not the crime rate of their counties.

As is the case with the first set of models, several of the socioeconomic and demographic control variables are significantly related to crime spending support. Education has the most powerful and consistent effects, with the coefficients for education negative and statistically significant in each election year. The effect of age drops out in the 1996 model, but emerges in both the 1992 and 1994 analyses, again indicating that younger respondents are more likely to support crime policies. While not significant in the baseline models, the coefficient for income becomes significant (at the .10 level) in the 1992 model and again in the 1994 model. The effects of marriage and gender are consistent with the initial analysis, indicating that married, female respondents are more likely to support increases in crime spending. Moreover, the political attitudes variables have mixed effects. Ideological orientation and pro-government variables have significant coefficients in the expected direction for 1992 and 1996, though not for 1994, and partisan identification has a significant negative coefficient only for 1996. Overall, with the exception of education, none of the additional independent variables have consistent effects on attitudes toward crime spending, though ideology, pro-government scale, age, and possibly gender have significant effects in two of three elections.

Considering the Effects of Perceptions of Blacks as Violent

Thus far we have been using a measure of racial attitudes that is based on the black feeling thermometer item, which measures general affect toward blacks. Gilens (1999) and others have relied on measures of racial attitudes that more specifically target the dependent variable that they are studying. For instance, in his study of welfare attitudes Gilens uses an item measuring respondents' views toward whether "blacks are hardworking" as an independent variable in his models. Unfortunately, there are no items that are directly linkable to the crime spending area for the 1994 and 1996 ANES surveys. However, an item was included in the 1992 ANES that measures the degree to which respondents agree that "blacks are violent." Arguably this item represents the kind of racial attitudes and perceptions that could possibly prompt a race-based response as individuals construct their attitudes toward crime spending. Given this, we drop the black feeling thermometer item and reestimate our core models of crime spending attitudes using the "blacks are violent" item as the primary independent variable of interest. We also estimate a second model that includes interaction terms for (1) perceptions of black violence and television news exposure and (2) perceptions of black violence and our "black crime" measure.

The results for this alternative specification is found in Table 3, where we report the ordered logit estimates for both the baseline and full models of support for crime spending. These models depict support for crime spending as a function of the "blacks are violent" item, television media exposure, contextual crime and racial variables, and the various political and socioeconomic-demographic variables.

In the baseline model the results indicate that the alternative measure of racial attitudes is a much better predictor of crime spending support. The coefficient for "blacks are violent" is both positive and statistically significant ($b = 0.199$, $t = 3.33$), indicating that whites who view blacks as violent (i.e., possessing a negative racial stereotype) are more likely to support increases in crime spending than similarly-situated respondents who do not view blacks as violent. Clearly, this outcome coincides with Gilens' supposition that negative stereotypes held by whites about blacks translate into support for (or opposition to) "race-coded" policies.

In addition, we find that television news exposure is positively and significantly related to the dependent variable ($b = 0.048$, $t = 1.73$). Individuals with high levels of television news exposure exhibit higher support for crime spending than those who have less exposure. We also find that the effects of objective crime and racial conditions are similar to the results of other models, as reported above. Here again, black population is shown to have a positive impact on support for crime spending ($b = -.036$, $t = 2.13$), but this effect declines with increases in the crime rate in respondents' home counties ($b = -0.316$, $t = -1.42$). This finding is consistent with those associated with the baseline models of crime-spending support reported in Table 1. Finally, many of the various control variables that appear significant in the Tables 1 and 2 remain significant in this analysis as well. For instance, in the baseline model age, education, gender, political ideology and pro-governmental attitudes are appear significant and in their expected directions.

In the second set of columns in Table 3 we report the results for a full interaction model of support for crime spending. As one can readily observe, the direct effect of perceptions that blacks are violent is quite weak. To be sure, the coefficient for the black violence variable is positive, but it does not achieve conventional levels of statistical significance. The coefficient for the interaction for black violence and our "black crime" measure is positive, as expected, and it is at the border of statistical significance in a one-tailed test and at a relaxed (.10) level of significance. Given this, one could make the argument that the effect of perceptions that blacks are violent on crime spending attitudes is accentuated for respondents living in a county with both a high crime rate and large black population. But the effect is not a strong one. Furthermore, the coefficient for the interaction that connects "blacks are violent" with television news exposure is not significant; it would appear that television viewership does not enhance the relationship between perceptions of black violence and support for additional crime spending.

DISCUSSION

Jamieson (1992: 33) reports²³ that crime is often thought of as “a shorthand signal...to a crucial group of white voters, for broader issues of social disorder, evoking powerful ideas about authority, status, morality, self-control and race.” This sentiment accordingly begs the question: is crime really a “race-coded” issue that evokes negative racial attitudes of whites to support increases in crime spending? This study suggests that perhaps it is not, or at least that it is not as strong an effect as one might have expected.

Gilens’ concept of “race coding” posits that certain race-neutral social policies become “race-coded” when whites negatively link these policies to race. His logic presumes that whites’ support or opposition to “race-coded” policies is based on their racial attitudes toward blacks and members of other minority groups. On the whole, our results find little support for Gilens’ notion of “race coding,” at least as it applies to support for crime spending. Many of our findings are not compatible with Gilens’ arguments. For instance, in several of our models favorable attitudes towards blacks are found to be related to *increases* in crime spending. This suggests that, contrary to the race-coding notion, the more *positive* feelings whites hold towards blacks, the more likely they are to support increases in crime spending. When we use an alternative measure of racial attitudes, however, our results, as reported in Table 3, more closely coincide with Gilens’ overall claims. Even so, these results are only significant within the baseline model of support, and the effect of racial attitudes diminishes with the inclusion of the media and crime interaction variables within the full model.

How does the media fare in this overall assessment? Previous research has suggested that coverage of crime in television news has been racialized, and so one might speculate that exposure to television news should increase support for crime spending and accentuate the relationship between racial attitudes and attitudes toward increased crime spending. Our results indicate that there is some modest evidence that television news exposure increases support for crime spending, though the relationship is inconsistent and not overly powerful. Moreover, it would appear that the media is “off the hook” in that it does not play a significant role in the shaping how individuals translate their racial attitudes into attitudes toward crime spending.

We also consider the possibility that individuals’ objective context, particularly in terms of racial composition and crime rates, has an effect on both support for increased crime spending and the relationship between racial attitudes and attitudes toward crime spending. We suggest that individuals who reside in counties with high crime rates, large black populations, and a combination of both are more likely to perceive crime as a problem and support higher crime spending. Moreover, we posit that these same environmental conditions mediate the relationship between racial attitudes and support for crime spending, insofar as citizens who reside in communities that are likely to accentuate the racial nature of crime should be more likely to link their attitudes toward blacks and their attitudes toward crime spending. Despite these speculations, our results are somewhat sketchy. Black population and crime rates occasionally have an effect on support for crime spending, but we uncover little evidence to support the assertion that these contextual variables affect the linkage between racial attitudes and crime spending attitudes.

If racial attitudes and the media are not responsible for creating support for crime spending, what is? Looking at our results, it is clear that a significant amount of the variance in crime spending attitudes is accounted for in the various control variables employed, such as age, gender, income, political ideology, marriage, and pro-government political attitudes. Perhaps the most consistent predictor of attitudes toward crime spending is education, which we find to depress levels of support for crime spending.

These results are certainly by no means a definitive answer in determining whether or not racial attitudes of whites are in fact responsible for shaping their opinions on policies related to crime.

²³ In reference to a comment made by Edsall and Edsall.

Although we find no relationship between black affect and crime spending, it may be that the measures used to test this relationship do not fully encompass the racial attitudes and policy preferences of the respondents. For instance, an alternative measure of racial attitudes (e.g., "blacks are violent") may be needed for all years to estimate accurately the perceptions of whites toward the linkage between blacks and crime. Moreover, it is possible that "crime spending" does not fully capture the attitudes of whites toward various crime policies. The role of the media in linking crime with race in this overall relationship is also not fully determined and an alternative measure of media (e.g., content analysis) may be needed to assess the role of the media in the shaping of racial attitudes. Further, we recognize that our measure of "black crime" is flawed and a more accurate measure of this variable is needed as well. Nonetheless, these findings give us some pause about the degree to which race coding occurs in whites' attitudes toward crime.

Appendix 1. Description of Variables

VARIABLE	DESCRIPTION
Support for Crime Spending	Scale of support for increased crime spending, measured on the following scale: -1 = crime spending should be decreased or cut out entirely; 0 = crime spending should be kept about the same; 1 = crime spending should be increased.
Black Feeling Thermometer	Scale of affect toward blacks, measured on a scale ranging from 0 to 100, with high scores representing positive feelings for blacks.
Blacks are Violent	Measured on a 7-point scale, ranging from 0 (blacks are peaceful) to 6 (blacks are violent). Variable available only for 1992.
Black Population	Percentage of blacks in respondents' home county.
Crime Rate	A measure of the number of "serious crimes known to police" per 100,000 population.
Black Crime	Proxy measure of black crime, created by multiplying black county population times county crime rate.
Television News Exposure	Measure of exposure to television news, based on the question: "How many days in the past week did you watch news on the TV?" Variable ranges from 0 (never) to 7 (every day).
Age	Age in years.
Education	Educational attainment, based on the highest level of school completed ; variable ranges from 1 (8 grades or less) to 7 (advanced degree).
Family Income	22-point scale, ranging from 1 (none or less than \$4500) to 22 (\$200,000 or over).
Gender	1 = Women; 0 = Men
Homeowner	1 = Homeowner; 0 = All other respondents
Married	1 = Married; 0 = All other respondents

Appendix 1 (continued)

VARIABLE	DESCRIPTION
Partisan Identification	Measure of partisan identification, ranging from 0 (strong Democrat) to 6 (strong Republican).
Ideological Identification	Measure of ideological identification, ranging from 0 (extremely liberal) to 6 (extremely conservative).
Pro-Government Scale	Scale of support for government activity over private-sector or market activity, based on a factor analysis of the following items: (1) support for government doing more vs. government doing less; (2) support for the free market handling complex economic problems vs. strong government handling those problems; and (3) government has become bigger over the years because it is involved in things that people should do themselves vs. government has gotten bigger because the problems we face have become bigger.
Political Efficacy	Scale of feelings of political efficacy, based on a factor analysis of the following items: (1) How much attention do you feel the government pays to what people think when it decides what to do? (2) How much do you feel that having elections makes the government pay attention to what the people think? In addition to these questions, respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements: (3) Public officials don't care much what people like me think. (4) People like me don't have any say about what the government does.
Political Trust	Scale of feelings of political trust, based on a factor analysis of the following items: (1) How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? (2) Do you think that people in government waste a lot/some/not very much of the money we pay in taxes? (3) Would you say that the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people? (4) Do you think that quite a few/not very many/hardly any of the people running the government are crooked?

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Table 1. Parameter Estimates for 1992, 1994 & 1996 Baseline Models of Support for Crime Spending.

	1992		1994		1996	
	b	t	b	t	b	t
Intercept						
Subjective Evaluations						
Black feeling thermometer	0.007	1.83	-0.003	-0.75	0.003	0.68
Objective Conditions						
Black populaton	0.035	2.13**	0.059	3.37***	0.030	1.58*
Crime rate ¹	1.910	0.53	13.850	3.31***	-0.827	-0.21
Black population * crime rate ¹	-0.312	-1.45*	-0.756	-3.26***	-0.081	-0.30
Media Usage						
Television news exposure	0.047	1.71**	0.089	2.74***	0.012	0.42
Political Attitudes						
Partisan identification	-0.022	-0.57	-0.008	-0.19	-0.121	-2.53***
Ideological orientation	0.171	2.96***	-0.069	-1.02	0.223	3.00***
Pro-government Scale	0.181	2.35***	--	--	0.435	3.98***
Political efficacy	0.046	0.47	-0.226	-1.87***	0.042	-0.39
Political trust	-0.083	-0.84	0.118	1.03	-0.139	-1.21
Socioeconomic Variables						
Age	-0.010	-2.16**	-0.015	-2.88***	-0.005	-1.05
Education	-0.223	-4.90***	-0.186	-3.47***	-0.132	-2.55***
Family income	0.019	1.32*	0.036	2.17**	0.009	0.58
Gender	0.197	1.44*	0.477	3.07***	-0.118	-0.77
Home owner	0.059	0.36	-0.087	-0.45	0.065	0.35
Married	0.027	0.17	0.070	0.40	0.301	1.76**
N	1103		963		870	
Pseudo-R ²	0.039		0.045		0.040	
***	prob < 0.01, one-tailed test					
**	prob < 0.05, one-tailed test					
*	prob < 0.10, one-tailed test					

¹ The coefficient and standard error for this variable have been multiplied by 100,000 to facilitate interpretation.

Table 2. Parameter Estimates for 1992, 1994 & 1996 Full Models of Support for Crime Spending.

	1992		1994		1996	
	b	t	b	t	b	t
Intercept						
Subjective Evaluations						
Black feeling thermometer	0.016	1.97**	-0.005	-0.53	0.001	1.18
Black feeling thermometer * black crime	0.002	0.42	-0.002	-0.37	0.003	0.41
Black feeling thermometer * TV News	-0.002	-1.44*	0.001	0.36	-0.002	-1.38*
Objective Conditions						
Blacks population	-0.036	2.10**	0.059	3.35***	0.029	1.51*
Crime rate ¹	1.960	0.53	13.850	3.30***	-0.782	-0.20
Black population * Crime rate ¹	-0.423	-1.16	-0.661	-1.90**	-0.227	-0.52
Media Usage						
Television news exposure	0.173	1.89**	0.055	0.55	0.155	1.44*
Political Attitudes						
Partisan identification	-0.020	-0.53	-0.008	-0.20	-0.119	-2.48***
Ideological orientation	0.170	2.93***	-0.070	-1.04	0.219	2.95***
Pro-Government scale	0.185	2.40***	--	--	0.440	4.01***
Political efficacy	0.050	0.50	-0.227	-1.88**	0.048	0.43
Political trust	-0.083	-0.84	0.119	1.04	-0.143	-1.23
Socioeconomic Variables						
Age	-0.009	-2.09**	-0.015	-2.87***	-0.005	-1.08
Education	-0.223	-4.87***	-0.186	-3.44***	-0.136	-2.62***
Income	0.018	1.29*	0.036	2.16**	0.010	0.62
Gender	0.206	1.51*	0.480	3.08***	-0.120	-0.79
Home owner	0.054	0.33	-0.084	-0.44	0.071	0.38
Married	0.038	0.25	0.073	0.42	0.299	1.75**
N	1103		963		870	
Pseudo-R ²	0.041		0.045		0.042	
***	prob < 0.01, one-tailed test					
**	prob < 0.05, one-tailed test					
*	prob < 0.10, one-tailed test					

¹ The coefficient and standard error for this variable have been multiplied by 100,000 to facilitate interpretation.

Table 3. Parameter Estimates for the 1992 Analysis of Support for Crime Spending, Using Alternative Measure of Black Racial Attitudes.

	Baseline Model		Full Model	
	b	t	b	t
Intercept				
Subjective Evaluations				
Blacks are violent	0.199	3.33***	0.166	1.26
Blacks are violent * black crime	--	--	0.005	1.43
Blacks are violent * TV News	--	--	0.013	0.46
Objective Conditions				
Black population	0.036	2.13**	0.040	2.31**
Crime rate ¹	1.790	0.48	1.850	0.49
Black population * crime rate ¹	-0.316	-1.42*	-0.682	-2.03**
Media Usage				
Television news exposure	0.048	1.73**	0.013	0.15
Political Attitudes				
Partisan identification	-0.012	-0.30	-0.001	-0.01
Ideological orientation	0.156	2.67***	0.151	2.56***
Pro-government scale	0.180	2.31**	0.190	2.41***
Political efficacy	0.058	0.59	0.043	0.42
Political trust	-0.015	-0.14	-0.031	-0.30
Socioeconomic Variables				
Age	-0.009	-1.92**	-0.008	-1.86**
Education	-0.209	-4.49***	-0.221	-4.69***
Income	0.020	1.41	0.020	1.40*
Gender	0.267	1.93**	0.232	1.67**
Home owner	0.033	0.20	0.064	0.39
Married	0.018	0.12	0.001	0.00
N	1078		1065	
Pseudo-R ²	0.044		0.047	
***	prob < 0.01, one-tailed test			
**	prob < 0.05, one-tailed test			
*	prob < 0.10, one-tailed test			

¹ The coefficient and standard error for this variable have been multiplied by 100,000 to facilitate interpretation.