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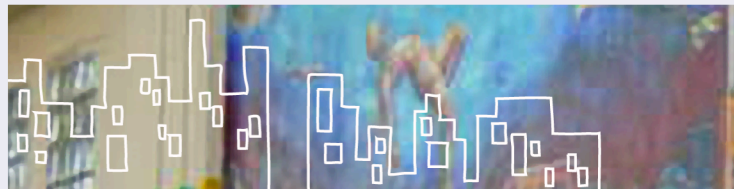
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**Explaining Support for Punitive Crime Policy:
Race, Social Context and Voting Behavior**

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By treating criminal justice ballot propositions as race-*implicit* policies that disproportionately *harm* racial minorities, this article explores the hypothesis that a change in social context increases support for punitive criminal justice policies. To do so, it draws on insights from two related specifications of Social Identity Theory: Racial Threat Hypothesis and Contact Theory. The analysis offers two methodological innovations: first, it uses longitudinal rather than cross-sectional data to more precisely capture the effect of individuals' experience; second, it draws upon a broader conceptualization of social context that includes not only racial composition of a county, but SES and education. The primary finding is that change in income and education levels by race/ethnicity and county-level political affiliation are significant predictors of support for race-implicit policies. The article concludes with a proposal for a mid-range theory of political behavior that takes into account the power of implicit messages about race in the political domain.

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Introduction

Most research on the interrelationship between social context and political and racial attitudes focuses on policies that are explicitly about race and that are perceived to benefit racial minorities (e.g. affirmative action for African-Americans). This research is largely found in the literature on social threat and subsequently operationalizes the concept of social threat in terms of the racial composition of a defined geographical area, using cross-sectional data. I argue that in the contemporary United States, a focus on race-explicit policies, racial composition, and non-longitudinal data is problematic. First, the norms of equality and tolerance render outright racial hostility unacceptable and it is reasonable to expect an analog in political attitudes. Seeking evidence of racial prejudice in support for policies that are unambiguously about race may in fact be misguided – if there is an effect of social context on policy preferences, it should be more pronounced in issues in which race is implicit. I propose that criminal justice propositions are an ideal means through which to investigate this hypothesis. Second, recent literature on social context provides compelling evidence that racial composition may not be sufficient for capturing the essence of group-based competition. Rather, education, income, and other demographic factors are likely also decisive. Finally, I posit that a longitudinal approach to the question of social context and policy preferences provides a more realistic view of people's experiences.

Despite numerous efforts to clarify the effect of social context on racial attitudes, the fundamental question remains unresolved: How do the demographic characteristics of the population in which an individual (usually White) lives shape her attitudes about racial minorities and the policies affecting them? Typically, this research is oriented around Social Identity Theory, and, more specifically, the Racial Threat Hypothesis and Contact Theory. Social

Identity Theory (SIT) proposes that a person's awareness of her membership in a relevant social group is key to her identity. This assumption undergirds Racial Threat Hypothesis (RTH), which suggests that membership in social groups gives rise to the perception of competition over resources and status. Similarly Contact Theory (CT) advances the idea that interaction (with important caveats regarding interaction type) between groups actually facilitates positive attitudes toward out-group members.

Empirical assessments of these theories have delineated some of the pivotal factors, often relying on racial composition of a neighborhood, ZIP code area, or county. The general causal chain is that increasing minority population is perceived by White individuals as an increased threat, which leads to decreased support for policies benefitting racial minorities at the (perceived) expense of White individuals. Yet, the evidence is mixed regarding the effect of racial heterogeneity on race-oriented policies. For example, Citrin et al. (1990) find no relationship between racial composition and racial attitudes, while Hood and Morris (1997) find that racial diversity does affect voting on race-explicit policies in the White population. There are numerous other studies that arrive at equally conflicting conclusions. One way to clarify the origins of these mixed results is to alter one component of the hypothesized causal story and examine the results.

Importantly, the standard approach to investigating the effect of social context on policy preferences is to target policies that explicitly invoke race and that ostensibly benefit racial minorities, such as affirmative action in hiring or college admissions. RTH proposes that competition makes White voters less likely to support a policy that would confer greater resources on racial minorities. CT proposes that more interaction with racial minorities would do the opposite. But what happens when we shift our focus to policies that *harm* racial minorities? I

argue that criminal justice ballot propositions are race-*implicit* policies that disproportionately *harm* racial minorities. What then is the effect of social context on support for these policies? I will show that the resulting revised causal chain is: change in social context increases support among White voters for punitive, race-implicit criminal justice policies that disadvantage racial minorities.

In sum, the goal of this project is to investigate the environmental determinants of policy support as a function of the ambiguity of the policy's racial content. The three innovations of this study are: 1) challenging current theory by testing a revised causal sequence; 2) more precisely capturing the effect of individuals' experience by using longitudinal rather than cross-sectional analysis; 3) utilizing a broader conceptualization of social context that includes not only race, but SES and education. The result makes a useful contribution to elucidating the boundaries between RTH and CT.

Reassessing Racial Threat and Contact Theories

To understand the role of social context in support for punitive crime policy, I draw on insights from two related specifications of Social Identity Theory: Racial Threat Hypothesis and Contact Theory. Tajfel and Turner's (1986) Social Identity Theory is the foundation of much research in this domain. This theory essentially posits that a part of people's identity arises from their awareness of being a member of a relevant social group. Importantly, this identity leads to perceiving their group as an "in-group" and being motivated to see it as both distinct from the "out-group" and more positive than other groups. This in-group/out-group distinction is theorized to be the source of group-based biases, such as racial antipathy. Indeed, RTH seeks to explain interracial hostility in terms of perceived competition over resources by distinct racial groups.

Kinder and Mendelberg (1995) explain the mechanisms at work: "...under conditions of racial proximity, racial stereotypes should be comparatively accessible. By enhancing the likelihood that racial stereotypes will come to mind, proximity may increase the role of prejudice in public opinion on racial policy" (p. 404). The crux of RTH is that people's membership in race-based in- and out-groups leads to the perception of competition over resources and status. The present study rests on a fine, but important, distinction: if the competition over resources leads to depriving out-group members of opportunities to gain, does it also lead to creating "opportunities" to be deprived of resources and/or status? This question is addressed by focusing on criminal justice policies in which race is an implicit issue.

Contact Theory posits that under certain circumstances (pertaining to contact frequency, arena, and context), interaction with out-group members actually facilitates the development of positive attitudes and a reduction of racial antipathy. Kinder and Mendelberg (1995) again explain the proposed mechanism: "...whites who regularly encounter blacks in their daily lives have a richer and more variegated base of information. Should their stereotypes be activated in considering policy matters, they may have a larger reservoir of sympathetic sentiments from which to draw as counterpoint. Less captured by categorical stereotypes, they may be less likely to act on them" (p. 405). In essence, Contact Theory proposes that with the right type of interaction across racial groups, racial antipathy will decrease because negative stereotypes will be less compelling in the face of "personal" evidence. This study's challenge to CT is whether or not racial antipathy decreases even in forums where the norms of equality and tolerance have less influence on behavior.

Measuring Social Context: Racial Composition

The notion of the atomistic voter belies the reality of the social context in which voters exist. The very nature of voting – an activity explicitly meant to affect other members of the public – entails being aware of and considering one’s social context. Thus, it is essential to also consider the social context in which people are developing their policy preferences. Most research testing these theories operationalizes interracial conflict by quantifying the racial composition of population of an area (county, ZIP code, neighborhood, etc.) (e.g. Branton 2004; Citrin et al. 1990; Citrin and Green 1990; Hero 1998; Hero and Tolbert 1996; Morris 2000; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). These studies also focus on policies and issues that are explicitly about race. The resulting evidence is mixed in terms of whether or not racial heterogeneity in a geographic area affects racial attitudes and race-related policy preferences. Some find that there is not a significant relationship between the proportion of racial minorities (e.g. Hispanic, Asian) in a geographic area (e.g. county) and support for policies such as those affecting bilingual education, affirmative action, or immigration (Citrin et al. 1990; Frensdreis and Tatalovich 1997; Cain, Citrin, and Wong 2000).

Others conclude that racial diversity does influence the voting behavior of the White population when race is explicitly invoked. Glaser’s (1994) prominent study of political attitudes among White people in counties with relatively more Black residents found that “racial environment has a strong and consistent effect on racial-political attitudes” such that more racial diversity is associated with more negative attitudes (among White residents) about Black political power and social progress. Another study, based in California and focused on a race-explicit proposition found that support for Prop 209 was higher in census tracts with larger Latino, African-American, or Asian-American populations, even when other relevant factors were

controlled for (Tolbert and Grummel 2003). Carsey (1995) found that larger African-American populations “‘negatively influence’ how White residents vote over the course of 40 years at both the county and the state level” (p. 222). Taylor (1998) found that “‘increases in negative attitudes among whites tend to slow and even reverse slightly as percent Black reaches its highest levels” (p. 526). I propose that by focusing on race-*explicit* issues, the approach typically used may actually diminish the very effect intended to be identified. That is, the norms of equality and tolerance dampen explicit expressions of racial antipathy and the implicit invocation of race will be associated with increased racial antipathy.

Measuring Social Context: Socio-Economic Status (SES)

Scholars have more recently challenged the notion that racial composition alone is sufficient for analyzing the effect of social context on policy attitudes. Some argue that socioeconomic status is a key social factor because it captures both people’s relative wealth and the commensurate potential for the perception of resource and status competition (e.g. Branton 2004; Huckfeldt 1986; Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Tolbert and Grummel 2003). Socio-economic status tempers the effect of racial diversity (e.g. Campbell, Wong, and Citrin 2006; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). While Quillian (1996) found an inverse relationship between average per capita income and racial antipathy, a few studies have explored the interaction between socioeconomic context and racial diversity (Branton and Bradford 2005; Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Oliver and Wong 2003). The general pattern is that high socioeconomic environs and highly diverse social contexts are associated with less racial antipathy as expressed in terms of support for race-explicit social issues. Conversely, there is more racial antipathy in areas of high racial diversity and low socioeconomic status

(Branton and Bradford 2005). Taken together, racial composition and SES measure key aspects of the social environment. They are observable phenomena that can help construct an objective description of the social characteristics geographic unit.

Measuring Social Context: Counties

Counties are a theoretically important and empirically valid analytical subject. As others have noted, counties are “a reasonable approximation of an individual’s mid-range social environment” (Campbell 2002, p. 52), because they are the level of government that administers many political, economic, and criminal justice functions. In addition, people are likely to be affected by the social world beyond their own ZIP code or census tract (Branton and Bradford 2005). Indeed, there is well-validated practice of using county-level data to study social context (e.g. Campbell, Wong, and Citrin 2006; Huckfeldt 1979; Key 1949; Campbell 2002).

Longitudinal Approach

The relationship between social environment and racial attitudes is typically revealed by a multivariate analysis of cross-sectional data. While interesting results have been found through this methodology, this approach misses the importance of a *change* in social factors. A quantified measure of the relative sizes of the “in-group” and “out-group” is the necessary first step for identifying racial threat or interracial contact. However, I hypothesize that this snapshot approach misses crucial information, which may help clarify the underlying mechanism. Individuals are continually making sense of the changes in social contexts they encounter. An attitude is the result of psychological processes and experiences leading up to that point in time. Since a voter’s awareness of the status of social and demographic factors in her community develops over time, I

posit that the difference *between* t_1 and t_2 matters more than status at t_1 *or* t_2 . By including a measure of how the environment has changed prior to voting on crime policy, this approach provides a more comprehensive test of RTH and CT.

Criminal Justice Propositions: Local & Race-Implicit

Criminal justice propositions are an ideal target for studying the relationship between social context and racial/political attitudes for two reasons. First, this approach comports with previous discoveries regarding the importance of “local geographical correspondence” (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000, p. 583). Oliver and Mendelberg (2000) find that “Whites’ preferences on race-targeted policies are influenced by their social environment, as the threat hypothesis might expect, but only in very specific ways” (p. 583) and that “[t]he impact of the geographical unit on a given policy is also likely to be contingent on the extent to which that unit affects the implementation of the policy” (p. 577). In terms of criminal justice policies, I submit that the personal nature of crime (and fear of it) give it high local geographical relevance, so we should expect to find strong support for the importance of social context on crime policy preferences.

The other reason to focus on criminal justice propositions is that doing so will clarify the mixed results in the literature on social context and political/racial attitudes. A plausible explanation for these results lies in the nature of race in the policies that were studied. Specifically, I posit that any predictors of support for race-oriented policy would be more evident when race is implicit rather than explicit in the policy. If there is indeed an effect of a county’s racial composition, it would be easier to identify in the case of criminal justice policies. A comparison of levels of support for propositions that are implicitly about race, explicitly about race, or race-neutral therefore provides useful insight. This approach comports with evidence that

the effect of social context is inconsistent across types of policy choices (Campbell, Wong and Citrin 2006, fn. 14 p. 135). I proceed by making the case that criminal justice propositions are implicitly about race due to the content of stereotypes about African-Americans. Then, I argue that it is the very existence of this implicitness that contributes to the popularity of punitive crime policy.

The abundant evidence from social psychological experiments demonstrates that there is a strong, prevalent psychological association between African-Americans and crime and/or violence. A few examples are particularly pertinent. Once people are exposed to a crime-relevant object (e.g. a gun or knife), people are more likely to visually attend to Black male faces (Eberhardt et al. 2006). In a video game-type set-up, people are more likely to “shoot” an armed or unarmed Black man (Correll, Park, Judd, and Wittenbrink 2002) than they are to shoot a White man. Police officers are more likely to choose Black faces than White ones when asked “Who looks criminal?” (Eberhardt et al. 2006). In a study of actual death penalty-eligible cases involving a White victim, defendants who were perceived to be more stereotypically Black were more likely to get the death penalty than those who were perceived to be less stereotypically Black (Eberhardt et al. 2006). Finally, people have been found to be more supportive of punitive policy when the offender is Black (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000; Gilliam, Iyengar, Simon, and Wright 1996). These are but a few examples out of hundreds of studies demonstrating that there is a stereotype associating African-Americans and crime or violence. In the present case, the implication is that when voters think about crime policy, they will almost necessarily *also* be thinking about Black people, and any negative stereotypes they have about this group will be activated – even if this is at a subconscious level. We can therefore expect that race and racial attitudes are a key factor in understanding people’s crime policy preferences.

Yet, there is reason to believe that this relationship between racial bias and support for crime policy is nuanced by its social and political context. Specifically, the social norm against explicit prejudice and discrimination and in favor of equality tempers expressions of racial bias, which leads to the other element of my argument: the *power* of the implicit nature of race in criminal justice propositions to influence voters' crime policy preferences.

Implicit messages about race may be even more effective than their explicit analogs. One relevant line of research investigates the very nature of modern-day racial prejudice and discrimination. Although there are several variants of this hypothesis, the common theme is that they may be becoming more subtle over time. For example, Kinder and Sears (1981) found that anti-Black attitudes are more likely to be based on the belief that Black people violate moral values such as self-reliance or individual responsibility rather than beliefs about their biological inferiority, which was fundamental to the racism of the 1800's and most of the 1900's. As a result, measures of this "modern racism" have been found to be better predictors of race-relevant policies than are measures of conventional racism (e.g. Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears et al. 1997). Because this traditional version of prejudice no longer typifies what is socially acceptable, outright hostility toward racial minorities is more likely to be denounced – even if people still harbor antipathy towards Black people or other racial minorities.

This shift helps explain Tali Mendelberg's (2001) findings regarding the effectiveness of race-relevant political messages. In an analysis of norms (e.g. equality), electoral strategies and voter psychology, she finds that implicit messages about race – such as equating Black men and criminals – are much more effective in galvanizing sympathetic voters than would be an explicitly racist message. In the latter, social norms lead to both the message and the messenger likely being rejected; while in the former, voters can respond to the message without ever being

aware of the racial message or the fact that they are responding to it (Mendelberg 2001, p. 8). The implication for understanding support for punitive crime policy is that the implicit essence of the race-relevant message in criminal justice propositions removes the constraint of the social norm of equality. Indeed, studies of the power of implicit messages about race specifically in the domain of policy (e.g. Kinder and Mendelberg 1995, Peffley and Hurwitz 2002) tend to find that “crime has become a coded way for politicians to talk about race” (Kinder and Mendelberg 1995, p. 414). The implicit nature of race in criminal justice propositions is thus a conduit for the expression of symbolic – rather than instrumental – concerns through the act of voting.

I draw attention to the intersection of racial stereotypes and implicit messages because it is a nexus that has not been adequately explored in terms of explaining support for punitive crime policy. For example, at least one study treats criminal sentencing as “non-racially relevant” (Branton 2004) and another proposes that African-Americans are not “singled out” via statewide initiatives (Hajnal and Louch 2001, p. 24). Treating criminal justice propositions as being implicitly about race challenges assertions like these, which are technically accurate but flawed in their implications. The suggestion being that since race is not explicitly a factor in criminal justice policies, there is no particular need to consider them in the context of Racial Threat or Contact Theory.

Data

To investigate the effect of social context on race-oriented policy preferences, I conduct zero-order correlations and regression analyses on data drawn from the US Census, the Statewide Database (maintained by University of California’s Institute for Governmental Studies), the California Secretary of State, and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Counties are the unit of analysis.

Information on social factors is taken from the 1990 US Census and the 2000 US Census. Because prior research finds racial composition to be a potentially important predictor of policy support, I include the percent of the county's population that is in the following categories: White, Black, Asian, Hispanic. Similarly, SES is an important marker of social status and individual well-being, so income and education levels by race/ethnic group are also included. Median home cost and median rent are included both as indicators of the financial status of the county and as a way to capture an aspect of the social environment that is likely to be salient to voters. Controls are included for people 18 to 44 years old, because they comprise the majority of the workforce and of the perpetrators and victims of crime. Both cross-sectional and longitudinal data for each of these factors is used. I control for population size by quintile. (A complete discussion is in Appendix C.) Because ideology has been found to be an important determinant of political preferences, the percent of the county that is registered Republican and Democrat is included (drawn from the Statewide Database).

The units of analysis are the 58 counties in the state of California.¹ The outcome variable of interest is the margin of support for propositions as a function of their race-relevance. I focus on a selection of fifteen propositions that fall into these three categories and were on ballots between (and including) 1994 and 2000. Focusing on these years maximizes the number of propositions that can be accurately classified as race-explicit and race-neutral, while also being within range of two sequential Censuses that provide the necessary demographic information. The propositions included in the study are listed in Tables 1 – 3. The race-neutral propositions were selected to be as removed from any message of race as possible; i.e. it is difficult to come up with a plausible argument that seismic retrofitting or the status of the mountain lion are either

¹ A similar methodology has been validated in studies of the death penalty (e.g. Mitchell and Sidanius 1995).

explicitly or implicitly about race. The race-explicit propositions each address some aspect of curtailing opportunity or resources for racial minorities. The infamous Prop 187 rendered “illegal aliens” ineligible for public social services, while Prop 209 banned affirmative action programs in any public forum. Prop 227 essentially removed bilingual education in public schools by requiring that non-English speakers be taught in “nearly all English.” As explained above, the race-implicit propositions all pertain to criminal justice. The unifying theme is that they all make state law more punitive – typically in terms of the death penalty. Prop 184 is the 3-Strikes law. Propositions 195 and 196 substantially increase the penalties for carjacking and drive-by shooting, respectively. Prop 21 does the same for certain gang-related activities.

I calculate the difference in the percent of voters who voted “Yes” on a proposition and those who voted “No” by county. The resulting amount represents the margin by which propositions pass (or fail, if negative). The *average* margin of support for each type of proposition (race-neutral, -explicit, -implicit) is used for most of the analyses. Data for election results are from the Statewide Database at University of California’s Institute for Governmental Studies and from the California Secretary of State’s Office (i.e. Statement of Vote for 1994, 1996).

Analysis

If the racial component (or lack thereof) of propositions was not related to support, then the level of support for each type of proposition – race-implicit, race-explicit, and race-neutral – should be equivalent. To test this, I plot the margin of support for each type of proposition within each county. Figures 1 – 3 show the average margin of support for each type of proposition for each county. This descriptive information reveals a few key insights. One is that there is a generally high level of support for criminal justice propositions. Excluding San Francisco

County, the margin of support ranges from 10% to 60%. Another insight is that support for these race-implicit propositions is indeed higher than for race-explicit propositions, on average. Again excluding three San Francisco Bay Area counties, support for these propositions ranges from 2% to just over 40%. Although more rigorous analysis is required to make claims about the mechanisms behind it (addressed in subsequent sections), there is a significant difference in levels of support as a function of the racial content of a proposition. The figures also show that support for race-neutral propositions tends to hover much more closely around a fifty-fifty split (margin of support range is -15% to +15%). Lastly, there is quite a range in the level of support *across* counties. Criminal justice propositions are popular, but they are so to varying extents. This variation in support provides both a motivating fact and a means to gain insight into support for punitive crime policy. Altogether, this initial examination of variation in support as a function of the type of proposition indicates that thinking about criminal justice policies as being implicitly about race is a fruitful approach to understanding support for punitive crime policy. Doing so highlights overall trends in support and the importance of county variation.

Figure 1: Margin of support for race-implicit propositions

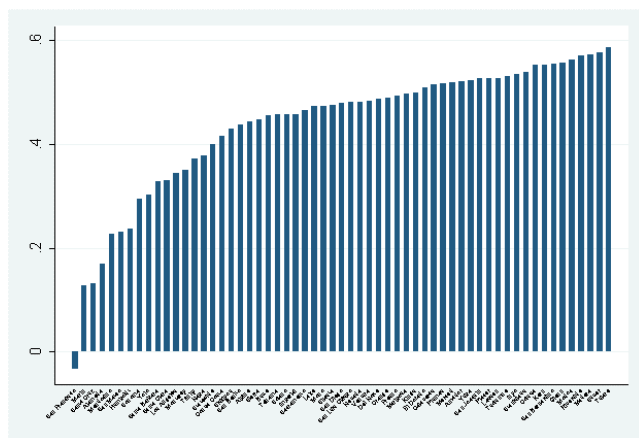


Figure 2: Margin of support for race-explicit propositions

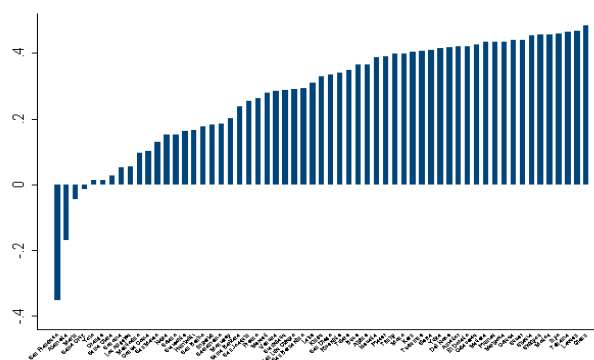
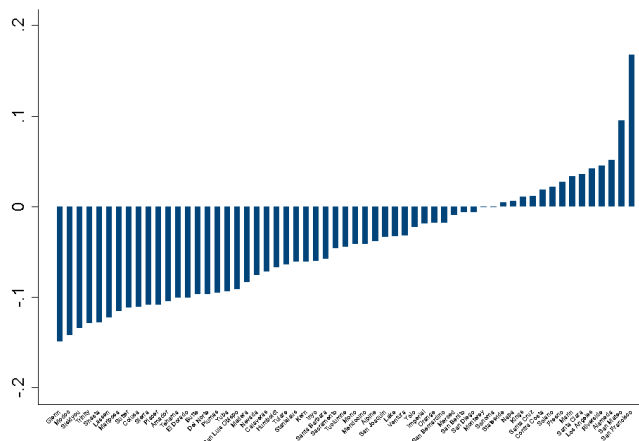


Figure 3: Margin of support for race-neutral propositions



The first step in identifying the relationship between social context and policy support is to conduct zero-order correlations with the independent variables of interest by type of proposition. Tables 1a and 1b show the bivariate relationships between racial composition (percent of county) and support for the three types of propositions in 1990 and in 2000. Table 1c contains the same information as a function of the change in composition *between* 1990 and 2000.

Table 1a: Race & Ethnicity, 1990

	CJ prop	race-explicit	race-neutral	% White pop.	% Black pop.	% Hisp. pop.	% Asian pop.
CJ proposition ²	1.0000						
race-explicit	0.8230*	1.0000					
race-neutral	-0.5871*	0.8207*	1.0000				
% White pop.	-0.0550	-0.1715	0.1993	1.0000			
% Black pop.	-0.0902	-0.2023	0.2306	0.9770*	1.0000		
% Hisp. pop.	-0.0548	-0.1749	0.2104	0.9834*	0.9944*	1.0000	
% Asian pop.	-0.1144	-0.2248	0.2438	0.9921*	0.9886*	0.9905*	1.0000

² The correlations between “CJ proposition,” “race-explicit,” and “race-neutral are only reported in the first table of the series, since they are constant.

Table 1b: Race & Ethnicity, 2000

	CJ prop	race- explicit	race- neutral	% White pop.	% Black pop.	% Hisp. pop.	% Asian pop.
% White pop.	-0.0512	-0.1648	0.1921	1.0000			
% Black pop.	-0.0754	-0.1924	0.2248	0.9717*	1.0000		
% Hisp. pop.	-0.0461	-0.1695	0.2074	0.9804*	0.9940*	1.0000	
% Asian pop.	-0.1161	-0.2290	0.2427	0.9868*	0.9849*	0.9888*	1.0000

Table 1c: Race & Ethnicity Percent Change, 1990 to 2000

	CJ prop	race- explicit	race- neutral	% White pop.	% Black pop.	% Hisp. pop.	% Asian pop.
% White pop.	0.1184	0.3651*	-0.4204*	1.0000			
% Black pop.	0.2631*	0.1440	-0.0904	0.1487	1.0000		
% Hisp. pop.	0.2823*	0.1686	-0.1267	0.1838	0.3923*	1.0000	
% Asian pop.	-0.0569	-0.2155	0.1728	0.1180	0.2517	0.1644	1.0000

Based on the cross-sectional data for the years 1990 and 2000, the relationship between racial composition and proposition type is not significant. Yet, the percent change in the Black and Hispanic populations is significantly related to support for criminal justice propositions. As the percent of this population increases, so does support for punitive crime policy. Conversely, as the White population increases, support for race-explicit propositions does as well. Support for race-neutral propositions decreases with an increase in the White population. The fact that an increase in the Black and Hispanic populations is associated with an increase in support for race-implicit propositions but NOT with support for race-explicit propositions is consistent with my hypothesis that the effect of social context should be more apparent when race is implicit in policy options than when it is explicit.

The other aspects of social context show a different pattern. Tables 2a and 2b show that in 1990 and 2000, the lower the per capita income for the White population, the more support there

is for both race-implicit and race-explicit propositions. Yet, Table 2c shows that the relationship between support for these propositions and *change* in income for the White population is positive – the greater the change in income for this group, the larger the margin of support for race-implicit and race-explicit propositions. This evidence suggests that the mechanism proposed by Racial Threat Hypothesis may be at work. Counties in which the White population has fewer resources exhibit a greater tendency to support policies that deprive racial minorities of opportunity and status.

Table 2a: Per capita income by race/ethnicity, 1990

		CJ proposition	race-explicit	race-neutral	White per capita income	Black per capita income	Asian per capita income	Other per capita income
per capita income	White	-0.6129*	-0.7318*	0.7105*	1.0000			
	Black	-0.2221	-0.3978*	0.3421*	0.4815*	1.0000		
	Asian	-0.2018	-0.3131*	0.3932*	0.5472*	0.5044*	1.0000	
	Other	-0.2357	-0.3440*	0.3023*	0.4418*	0.4161*	0.3360*	1.0000

Table 2b: Per capita income by race/ethnicity, 2000

per capita income	White	-0.6676*	-0.7751*	0.7776*	1.0000			
	Black	-0.1867	-0.1687	0.1752	0.3436*	1.0000		
	Asian	-0.2128	-0.2019	0.2706*	0.4816*	0.4639*	1.0000	
	Other	-0.2671*	-0.2753*	0.2789*	0.3780*	0.3214*	0.4493*	1.0000
	Hispanic	-0.2419	-0.2019	0.2463	0.3649*	0.0707	0.5307*	0.2748*

Table 2c: Change in per capita income by race/ethnicity, 1990 to 2000

change in per capita income	White	0.5217*	0.3767*	-0.3624*	1.0000			
	Black	-0.1152	-0.1621	0.0561	0.0452	1.0000		
	Asian	0.0593	-0.1504	0.2003	0.2198	0.0287	1.0000	
	Other	-0.0709	-0.1394	0.0925	-0.0512	-0.0915	0.1882	1.0000

The pattern in educational attainment is notable in that for race-implicit propositions, the proportion of each racial/ethnic group that had a college degree is not significantly correlated in either 1990 or in 2000 – but the *change* in the proportion is significant for the White, Hispanic, and Asian populations. In contrast, the cross-sectional measures of education are significant for all groups for both of the other types of propositions. As the level of education decreased, support for race-implicit and race-explicit propositions increased. These relationships are a preliminary indication that change in social factors is key and that educational attainment is an important aspect of social context to consider.

Table 3a: Education by race/ethnicity, 1990

		CJ proposition	race-explicit	race-neutral	White education	Black education	Hispanic education	Asian education
education	White	-0.0966	-0.3493*	0.3926*	1.0000			
	Black	-0.1622	-0.3149*	0.3415*	0.8937*	1.0000		
	Hispanic	-0.0901	-0.2838*	0.3368*	0.9571*	0.9648*	1.0000	
	Asian	-0.2540	-0.4255*	0.4393*	0.9392*	0.9501*	0.9623*	1.0000

Table 3b: Education by race/ethnicity, 2000

education	White	-0.2127	-0.4436*	0.4508*	1.0000			
	Black	-0.1520	-0.3144*	0.3352*	0.8839*	1.0000		
	Hispanic	-0.2522	-0.4267*	0.4210*	0.9488*	0.9364*	1.0000	
	Asian	-0.1293	-0.3274*	0.3656*	0.9567*	0.9667*	0.9625*	1.0000

Table 3c: Change in education by race/ethnicity, 1990 to 2000

education	White	-0.7339*	-0.7609*	0.6454*	1.0000			
	Black	-0.0477	-0.0822	0.0443	0.2107	1.0000		
	Hispanic	-0.3940*	-0.4722*	0.2434	0.5057*	0.1299	1.0000	
	Asian	-0.2699*	-0.3958*	0.4433*	0.4164*	0.3448*	0.4131*	1.0000

Table 4a: Political Party, 1990

	CJ proposition	race- explicit	race- neutral	% Repub.	% Dem.
% Republican	0.7304*	0.6485*	-0.5079*	1.0000	
% Democrat	-0.5727*	-0.5740*	0.4663*	-0.9309*	1.0000

Table 4b: Political Party, 2000

% Republican	0.8290*	0.8406*	-0.6997*	1.0000	0.0000
% Democrat	-0.6527*	-0.7542*	0.6702*	-0.9124*	1.0000

Table 4c: Change in Political Party, 1990 to 2000

change in % Republican	0.4881*	0.6534*	-0.5990*	1.0000	0.0000
change in % Democrat	-0.1971	-0.3949*	0.4341*	-0.8567*	1.0000

In both 1990 and 2000, percent Republican has a strong positive correlation with support for both race-implicit and race-explicit propositions. Percent Democrat has a strong negative correlation with both types of proposition. As the percent of registered Republicans increases, so does support for CJ propositions and race-explicit propositions. Support for race-explicit propositions decreases as there are more registered Democrats.

These correlations begin to characterize the relationship between various aspects of the social context and support for race-implicit and race-explicit propositions. Change in social factors is significant for most indices. There is mixed evidence regarding the power of race-implicit propositions to elicit greater support than race-explicit. More accurately assessing the interrelationships between these factors requires a simultaneous accounting of the effect of each, while controlling for relevant factors such as overall population. To accomplish this, I use regression analysis. Tables 5a-c show the results of regressing the three types of propositions on the various combinations of social factors.

Table 5a: Regression Analysis of Racial Composition

		Race-Implicit Propositions		Race-Explicit Propositions		Race-Neutral Propositions	
		Coef.	<i>Std. Err.</i>	COEF.	<i>Std. Err.</i>	COEF.	<i>Std. Err.</i>
% change in population	White	.0547046	.071	.445178*	.090	-.1862595*	.042
	Black	.069297*	.036	.0627618	.058	-.0113395	.021
	Hispanic	.1282064	.102	.0909788	.146	-.0200938	.053
	Asian	-.0682315	.0517	-.204097*	.068	.0589903*	.025
	constant	.4693236*	.065	.2945501*	.088	-.0602698	.032

For propositions that have an implicit racial content, only the change in the Black proportion of the population is a significant predictor of support. As this population increases, so does support for punitive crime policy. In contrast, for race-explicit propositions, the change in the White and Asian populations predicts support, although in different directions. The larger the increase in the White population, the more support for race-explicit policies. The larger the increase in the Asian population, the less support for race-explicit policies. The opposite is true

for race-neutral policies. That an increasing Black population is associated with more support for punitive crime policy but *not* with race-explicit policies supports one of the ideas proposed in this analysis: when race is implicit, there should be a more pronounced effect of racial composition on policy preferences. That an increasing White population predicts more support for race-explicit policies is inconsistent with Racial Threat Hypothesis but may support Contact Theory. If there are fewer racial minorities, then there are fewer opportunities for interracial interaction resulting in less opportunity to counteract any negative attitudes about racial minorities on the part of White individuals.

However, this is only a partial picture of the social context. In keeping with prior work, I expand the concept of social context to include socio-economic status. Table 5b shows the result for the expanded model. When change in income by racial group is included, racial composition is no longer a significant predictor of support for race-implicit policies. However, even when controlling for SES, the increase in the White population is still associated with more support for race-explicit policies. As the per capita income of the White population increases, so does support for punitive crime policy. Conversely, as the per capita income of the Black population decreases, so does support for punitive crime policy, although the size of this effect is relatively small. That increasing material wealth is associated with increasing support for both race-implicit and race-explicit propositions contradicts Racial Threat Hypothesis, which would predict the opposite. It could be a reflection of the effect of increasing income inequality along racial lines: as the White population accrues more wealth, while the Black population accrues less, there could be fewer commonalities across groups, which makes in/out-group boundaries that much more stark. In this instance, too, the evidence is more consistent with Contact Theory.

Table 5b: Regression Analysis of Racial Composition & Income

		Race-Implicit Propositions		Race-Explicit Propositions		Race-Neutral Propositions	
		Coef.	Std. Err.	COEF.	Std. Err.	COEF.	Std. Err.
% change in population	White	.1061409	.101	.5249537*	.158	-.2425193*	.074
	Black	.0351029	.039	.0286762	.073	.0110476	.029
	Hispanic	.0950076	.098	.0349628	.159	.0220748	.053
	Asian	.0723745	.070	-.0383842	.111	-.0063908	.032
change in per capita income	White	.0061688*	.001	.0073558*	.002	-.0029641*	.000
	Black	-.0000156*	3.40e-06	-.0000211*	.000	1.77E-06	1.99e-06
	Asian	-.000011	.000	-.0000702	.000	.0000438*	.000
	Other	-.000227	.000	-.0001384	.000	-.0001133	.000
	constant	.1687579	.110	-.058705	.179	.0732064	.064

The other aspect of SES is educational attainment, which has been shown to be an important factor in examining social context (e.g. Oliver and Mendelberg 2000). I use a measure of the change in the proportion of each racial/ethnic group that has a college degree. The results are in Table 5. For race-implicit propositions, when education is included, the effect of racial composition becomes significant for Asians, and the change in per capita income for the White population remains positive and significant. The effect of Black per capita income is diminished. For race-explicit propositions, only change in the White population and educational attainment are significant. As the White population increases and as educational attainment in this group decreases, support for race-explicit propositions grows. Educational attainment changes the effect of racial composition and income for race-implicit propositions and overrides the effect of income for race-explicit propositions. This pattern provides more evidence that expanded measures of social context are useful for understanding racial/political attitudes.

Table 5c: Regression Analysis of Racial Composition, Income, & Education

		Race-Implicit Propositions		Race-Explicit Propositions		Race-Neutral Propositions	
		Coef.	Std. Err.	COEF.	Std. Err.	COEF.	Std. Err.
% change in population	White	.0118034	.114	.4584921*	.129	-.2458452*	.059
	Black	.013455	.042	.0130797	.059	.006051	.027
	Hispanic	.0715666	.101	-.105593	.109	.1035188*	.046
	Asian	.1871362*	.079	.1004988	.081	-.0356104	.033
change in per capita income	White	.0031954*	.001	.0016267	.001	-.0013618	.000
	Black	.0001181	.000	.0000855	.000	-.0000244	.000
	Asian	3.64e-06	.000	-8.73e-06	.000	.0000211	.000
	Other	-.0002863	.000	.0000445	.000	-.000171	.000
change in educational attainment	White	-.1553494	.088	-.3755517*	.104	.1540373*	.042
	Black	.0111017	.029	.0040174	.039	-.0057073	.012
	Hispanic	-.1892326	.125	-.2069445	.135	-.0538977	.047
	Asian	-.0258738	.018	-.0290756	.018	.0177973*	.0082
	constant	.1759193	.108	.0581895	.122	-.0341005	.051

Political affiliation is the final aspect of social context to consider. Table 5c shows the results for the full model that includes this factor. When political affiliation is included in the model, none of the racial composition measures are significant for race-implicit propositions. But the change in the White population continues to have a positive relationship with race-explicit propositions, and change in White educational attainment is now significant (and negative). Including political affiliation does not change the pattern of relationships between change in income by racial group and support for different types of propositions. As the percent of registered Republicans and registered Democrats increases, so does support for both race-implicit and race-explicit propositions. This is somewhat contrary to standard accounts of political ideology that associate Republican affiliation with a more conservative orientation and more

antipathy toward racial minorities and Democratic affiliation with the opposite. This substantiates the idea that implicit race policies have inordinate power to garner support.

Table 5d: Regression Analysis of Racial Composition, Income, Education, & Political Affiliation

		Race-Implicit Propositions		Race-Explicit Propositions		Race-Neutral Propositions	
		COEF.	<i>Std. Err.</i>	COEF.	<i>Std. Err.</i>	COEF.	<i>Std. Err.</i>
% change in population	White	.0858294	.115	.4906828*	.144	-.2570854*	.064
	Black	.0253952	.046	.0087756	.068	.0063039	.0347
	Hispanic	-.0194141	.100	-.1975256	.125	.1287262*	.0531
	Asian	.1211961	.071	.0224797	.086	-.0148631	.0375
change in per capita income	White	.0028866*	.001	.001445	.001	-.0013046	.000
	Black	.0000681	.000	.0000132	.000	-5.76E-06	.000
	Asian	.0000317	.000	.000021	.000	.0000131	.000
	Other	-.0001323	.000	.000244	.000	-.0002232*	.000
change in educational attainment	White	-.20002*	.075	-.4120272*	.097	.1645294*	.044
	Black	.0103716	.031	.008977	.037	-.0067444	.013
	Hispanic	-.019918	.117	-.0066947	.153	-.107153	.056
	Asian	-.0125314	.019	-.0082157	.021	.0124956	.009
change in political party	Republican	1.970575*	.916	2.55437*	1.23	-.6684914	.410
	Democrat	1.929287*	.823	2.057753*	1.00	-.5580907	.328
	constant	.4503262*	.150	.354047	.209	-.1141705	.084

Discussion & Policy Relevance

Taken together, these results suggest that arenas in which race is implicit are indeed a promising route to insight into the interaction of social context and racial/political attitudes. The results presented here also validate previous findings that racial composition may not be sufficient for applying Racial Threat and Contact Theories to the study of social context. Income and county-level political affiliation also have an effect. In addition, the longitudinal approach to the question of social context and policy preferences does indeed contribute to understanding

how social factors relate to policy preferences.

As described above, the RTH and CT literatures offer competing explanations and predictions for the effect of racial composition on policy attitudes. The former implies that greater diversity likely leads to greater racial bias, while the latter implies that increased diversity leads to diminished racial bias. However, both theories are premised on race being an *explicit* attitude object. Importantly, my hypothesis that criminal justice propositions are *implicitly* about race complicates the relevance and tractability of each theory.

If the social identity and competition mechanisms of social threat theory are operating, then it could be the case that as a county becomes more diverse, voters – who are still majority White – express their anxiety over a perceived scarcity of resources by supporting policies that limit resources and opportunities for people of color. For this theory to be truly tenable in the case of race-implicit criminal justice policies, it would have to be plausible that voters perceive those who are most affected by punitive crime policy to be dissimilar from themselves (e.g. non-White, for most voters) *and* that the consequence of this policy would *increase* resources for the voters themselves. While the assumption about dissimilarity has face validity, the resource issue is far less credible. Not only is California's drastic budget shortfall a salient and persistent topic, but there could hardly be more contrast between the demographic of likely crime victims and the demographic of likely voters: young (18-24), African-American, male, poorly educated, low socio-economic status versus older (>50), White, female, educated, middle or high socio-economic status. Voters are supporting policies that they are almost certain to pay for through taxes, underfunded schools, reduced public services, and other public means, despite the fact that voters are extremely unlikely to receive any instrumental benefit in the form of increased personal safety.

In contrast, if the social identity and personal interaction mechanisms of Contact Theory are at work, then an increase in racial diversity might lead to reduced racial antipathy. However, this theory has been developed in the framework of race being an explicit attitude object. The implicit nature of race in punitive crime policy problematizes the implications of Contact Theory because the theory requires that the socially salient characteristic of the out-group be known, e.g. race. For this theory to be tractable in the case of criminal justice policy, the out-group in question has to be criminal offenders – that they tend to be non-White essentially becomes a secondary issue. Thus, assessing the effect of racial composition on policy attitudes only accesses part of this theory's explanatory power. That is, while Contact Theory is useful for understanding the effect of increasing racial diversity on explicit racial attitudes, it is limited in explaining attitudes toward punitive crime policy in the absence of interaction between voters and criminal offenders.

This study has several implications for California's method of subjecting major changes (which tend to be punitive) in criminal justice policy to voter approval. The evidence that a change in social factors does play a role in support for punitive crime policy suggests that a voter's social context actually plays an identifiable role in election outcomes. In other words, Voter X would vote one way in County 1 and perhaps another way in County 2. As California continues to become more racially diverse, there may be increasing support for race-explicit and race-implicit propositions. One way of interpreting the apparent domination of symbolic concerns over instrumental ones is that support for punitive crime policy is more a result of having the opportunity to vote on it than of actual or likely crime victimization experience. If a change in racial composition or in income are significant predictors of higher support for expensive policies, perhaps simply having the option to express symbolic concerns in the voting booth in this particular domain should be more thoroughly evaluated.

Although it may not always be the case, the fact that demographics of counties are changing much more so than demographics of voters points to the importance of understanding what drives support for punitive crime policy. It will be interesting to note the effects of interplay between changes in the racial composition of county residents versus changes in the racial composition of the *voting* population. The findings of this study suggest that the magnitude of these population changes will be a key determinant of policy preferences.

Conclusion

In the realm of crime policy, it is readily apparent that instrumental concerns cannot fully account for the support it garners. The likelihood that a voter in support of a punitive crime policy personally benefits is exceedingly small. So to explain widespread support, we must look elsewhere. A central goal here has been to explore the possibility that social context provides useful insight into this issue. Social context contributes to giving voters a sense of the state of the social world. In turn, these perceptions form the basis for individual meaning making, which links the “objective” facts of the world to subjective realities such as policy preferences. Peoples’ observations of changing social context inform their ideas about the social environment, providing insight into questions about whether or not it is improving, if their own social standing is on the rise or decline, and how likely they are to be a victim of crime, among other things.

To return to the overarching goal of this project, I propose the following mid-range theory of political behavior. Both implicit and explicit racial biases are affected by changing social factors. Because there are social sanctions against explicit expressions of racial bias, implicit bias will be revealed in socially appropriate domains; and, because the messages about race are implicit in punitive crime policy proposals, punitive crime policy is such a domain. A change in

social factors influences implicit racial bias, which leads to more support for punitive crime policy. Taken altogether, the evidence presented herein suggests that changing social factors are grist for the meaning-making mill. By focusing on social change and the resulting political outcomes, this study helps to forge a link between the meaning people make of their social context and the political decisions they make.

APPENDIX A

Table 1: Race-Neutral Propositions in Study

RACE-NEUTRAL

<u>#</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ELECTION</u>		<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
		<u>TYPE</u>		
Prop 1A	1994	primary		\$2 billion for earthquake relief and seismic retrofitting
Prop 192	1996	primary		Provides for a bond issue of two billion dollars to provide funds for a seismic retrofit program
Prop 197	1996	primary		Repeal mountain lion's status as specially protected mammal
Prop 12	2000	primary		Bond issue for water projects
Prop 30	2000	primary		Insurance claims practices, civil remedies
Prop 27	2000	primary		Term limit declarations

Table 2: Race-Explicit Propositions in Study

RACE-EXPLICIT

<u>#</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ELECTION</u>		<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
		<u>TYPE</u>		
Prop 187	1994	general		Illegal aliens ineligible for public social services
Prop 209	1996	general		Ban discrimination on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in public employment, education, or contracting
Prop 227	1998	special		California public schools required to teach LEP students in special classes that are taught nearly all in English

Table 3: Race-Implicit Propositions in Study

RACE-IMPLICIT

<u>#</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ELECTION</u> <u>TYPE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Prop 184	1994	general	"Three Strikes Law"; life in prison for three serious crimes
Prop 195	1996	primary	Murder during a carjacking, and murder of jurors, added to special circumstances that permit death penalty
Prop 196	1996	primary	Intentional murder by shooting from a motor vehicle added to list of special circumstances for death penalty
Prop 18	2000	primary	Murder, special circumstances
Prop 19	2000	primary	Murder of police officers
Prop 21	2000	primary	Juvenile crime

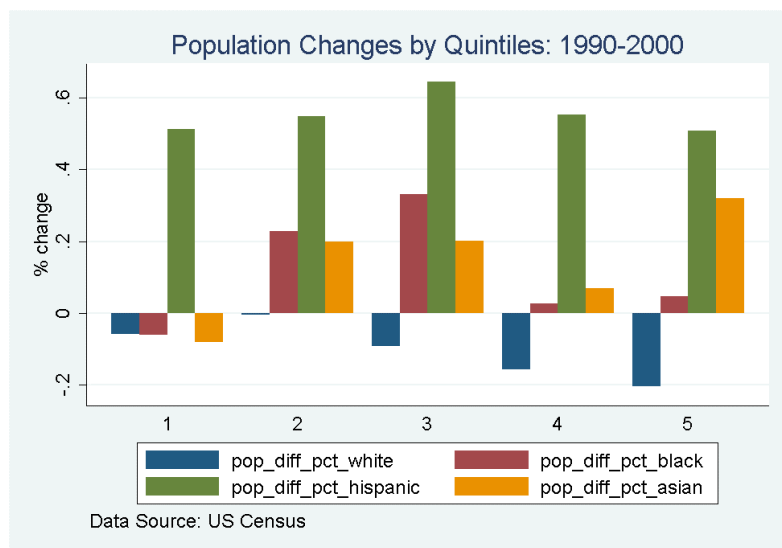
APPENDIX C: Quintile Analysis

California has 12% of the nation's population and, during the 1990's, it had the largest population increase – adding 4.1 million people to its population. Between 1990 and 2000 its White population decreased by 22% and the African-American population decreased by 1.2%, while the Hispanic population increased by 55%. Examining the changes in population by quintile yields some interesting patterns. Table 4 lists the counties by quintiles of population size. Chart D shows changes in population by racial category.

Table 4: CA's counties by quintiles of population

<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>	<u>5th</u>
Alpine	Amador	Butte	Kern	Alameda
Colusa	Calaveras	El Dorado	Marin	Contra Costa
Del Norte	Lake	Humboldt	Monterey	Fresno
Glenn	Lassen	Imperial	San Joaquin	Los Angeles
Inyo	Mendocino	Kings	San Luis Obispo	Orange
Mariposa	Nevada	Madera	San Mateo	Riverside
Modoc	San Benito	Merced	Santa Barbara	Sacramento
Mono	Siskiyou	Napa	Santa Cruz	San Bernardino
Plumas	Sutter	Placer	Solano	San Diego
Sierra	Tehama	Shasta	Sonoma	San Francisco
Trinity	Tuolumne	Yolo	Stanislaus	Santa Clara
	Yuba		Tulare	Ventura

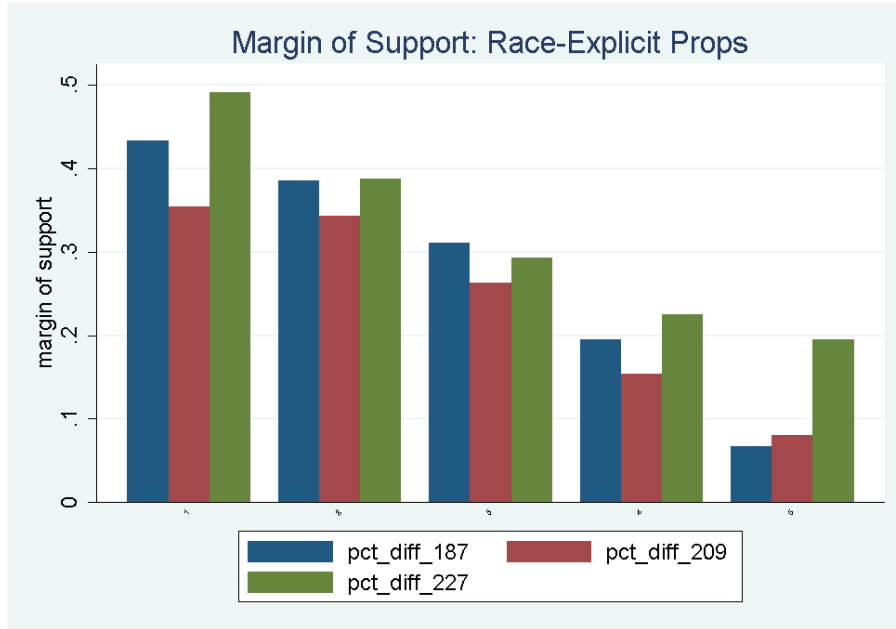
Chart D: Population changes by quintile and racial category (1990-2000)



While every quintile experienced a significant increase in the percentage that is Hispanic, the smaller counties lost population in every other racial category. In contrast, the largest counties lost the highest percentage of White population, while the moderate-sized counties gained in all categories except White. These changes by quintile highlight the fact that there may be some social factors that are correlated with the size of the county. For example, there is an interesting interaction between race and change in income by quintile as shown in Table 5.

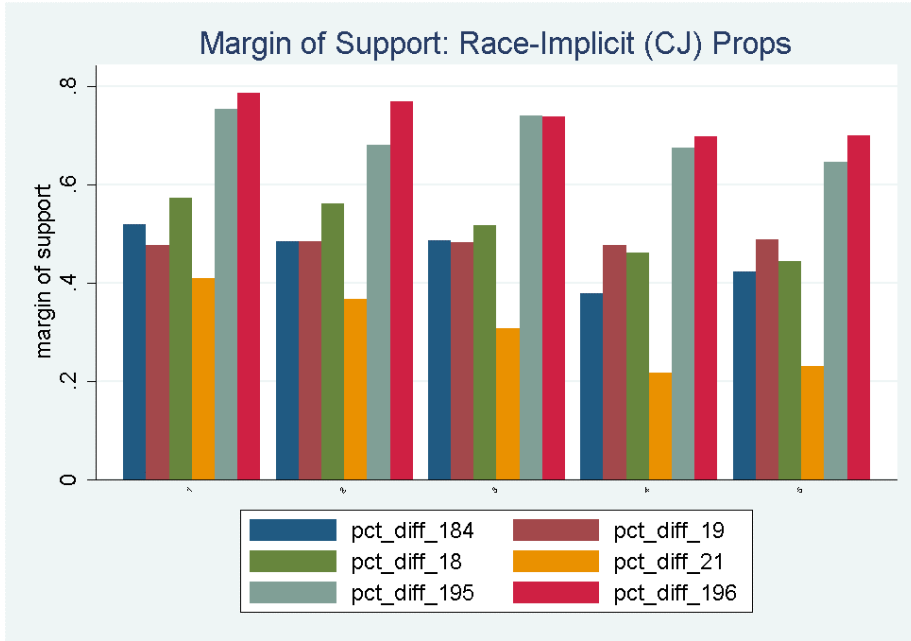
There are some important initial differences in support for policy as a function of race-relevance. Chart E shows that the margin of support for race-explicit propositions varies consistently with quintile. Each quintile has three bars – one for each of the race-explicit propositions.

Chart E: Margin of support for race-explicit propositions by quintile



What is most apparent is the near direct negative relationship between size of population and support for race-explicit propositions – as the size of the county increases, the margin of support decreases. This pattern is consistent with findings in the political preference literature that show a positive relationship between larger populations/urban areas and more prevalent liberal ideology. However, this accounting fails to explain the pattern in Chart F, which depicts support for race-implicit propositions by quintile.

Chart F: Margin of support for race-implicit propositions by quintile



Here, it is clear that there is no such association between support for race-implicit propositions and size of population. The margin of support is rather similar across all quintiles. This discrepancy leads back to the central research question: Does a change in social factors help explain margin of support for race-implicit propositions?

Table 5: Percent income change by Race and Quintile

Quintile	<u>% Income Change</u>			
	Black	White	Asian	Per Capita
1st	-1553.17	50.19	-312.12	54.86
2nd	-109.93	50.91	-77.35	52.96
3rd	18.06	49.17	15.56	53.49
4th	29.47	50.01	35.24	56.80
5th	45.80	50.12	39.53	58.57

What is most striking about the change in income is that the White population's income is remarkably consistent across all quintiles – in both small and large counties, and counties in between, this population's income increased by 50% between 1990 and 2000. However, the income of both the Black and Asian population varied quite a bit by quintile and tends to be negatively correlated with the size of the county's total population. (Note: the large figures for Black and Asian in the first and second quintiles may be an artifact of the small population of these groups in smaller counties.)

As would be expected, housing costs are higher in counties with a larger population, as shown in Table 6. But there is very little difference in the change in the vacancy rate by quintile:

Table 6: Housing Costs and Percent Change in Vacancy Rate

Quintile	1990 Median Rent	1990 Median Home Cost	% Change in vacancy
1st	\$307.91	\$91,836.36	1.51%
2nd	\$365.75	\$108,166.70	0.72%
3rd	\$400.36	\$112,654.50	0.36%
4th	\$535.58	\$197,425.00	-0.05%
5th	\$573.67	\$202,308.30	-0.40%

Taken together, these measures indicate that size of the population might have some explanatory power in terms of support for punitive crime policy. That is, there are some important differences as a function of population, such as changes in racial composition, changes in income by racial category and housing costs in general – all of which may be contributing to the overall character of a county. Because there are differences by quintile on these measures it is prudent to assume that there are differences on social factors for which there are no measures. To account

for these differences that vary as a function of population size, I use quintile itself as a control in my analyses.

APPENDIX D: Census Data Sources

Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

Census 1990 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data

Census 2000 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data

Census 1990 Summary File 3 (SF 3) - Sample Data

Note regarding differences between short and long form estimates used in census:

“The differences between the long form estimates in SF 3 and values in SF 1 or SF 2 are particularly noticeable for the smallest places, tracts, and block groups. The long form estimates of total population and total housing units in SF 3 will, however, match the SF 1 and SF 2 counts for larger geographic areas such as counties and states, and will be essentially the same for medium and large cities.” http://factfinder.census.gov/home/en/epss/sf3_compare.html

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