Beyond Welfare: Framing and the Racialization of White Opinion on Social Security

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In this article I argue that the framing of Social Security in political discourse has associated it symbolically with race. The linkages are subtle and symbolic, and they serve to associate Social Security with whiteness in a mirror image of the association of welfare with blackness. In turn, these associations have racialized white opinion on the program. After discussing the theoretical mechanism by which issue frames can unconsciously associate policies with citizens' racial predispositions, I review the frames surrounding Social Security. Then, drawing on two decades of nationally representative survey data, I demonstrate the racialization of opinion among whites. Using a variety of measures of racial predispositions, I find that racially conservative whites feel more positively about Social Security than do racial liberals. I conclude by considering the implications of these findings for our understanding of racialized politics and for the connections between race, whiteness, and contemporary American politics.

Many consider Social Security to be unique, and uniquely popular, among New Deal social welfare programs. Political actors and scholars have both suggested that the popularity of the program is rooted importantly in its universal design. Unlike other social welfare programs, almost all Americans—including members of the middle and upper classes—can expect to receive Social Security benefits. In this article I argue that the framing of Social Security in political discourse has associated it symbolically with race. The linkages are subtle and symbolic, and they serve to associate Social Security with *whiteness* in a mirror image of the association of welfare with blackness. In turn, these associations have racialized white opinion on the program. This leads white Americans who feel closer to and more warmly about whites as a group to feel more positively about Social Security, compared with those who feel less close and warm toward their racial group.

This analysis is important for several reasons. In addition to improving our understanding of opinion on Social Security itself, this analysis expands importantly our understanding of the process and impact of the "race coding" of political rhetoric. By focusing on Social Security, this analysis suggests that racialization is both more subtle and more pervasive than we might otherwise suspect, and it adds a new dimension to our understanding of the role of race in political discussion and opinion in contemporary America. The analysis also highlights the importance of *whiteness* for policymaking and opinion and puts Social Security's universality in a somewhat different light. This vision of Social Security as simultaneously universal and yet associated symbolically with whiteness is consistent with the growing literature on whiteness, which draws attention to its invisibility, and its consequent easy equation with normality and universality (e.g., Daniels 1997; Dyer 1997; Frankenberg 1993; Roediger 1999; Morrison 1992).

The idea of race as a set of objective, scientific categories of human beings has been thoroughly debunked (Fields 1982; Gould 1996; Lewontin 1982; Omi and Winant 1994). Nevertheless, race is nevertheless very real socially, politically, and psychologically. As an ideological formation, it does huge work to create and normalize

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social arrangements in our society; it serves as an important basis of political competition and opinion formation; it underlies many of the assumptions that drive policymaking and the formation of political institutions; and the psychological distinction between "us" and "them" plays an important role in making sense of the social world (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Converse 1964; Edsall and Edsall 1992; Hirschfeld 1996; Massey and Denton 1993; Quadagno 1994; Tajfel 1982).

The links between whites' racial attitudes and their opinions on welfare policy have been well documented. Scholars have demonstrated the racialized basis of welfare policy design and implementation, the race coding of rhetoric and media portrayals, and the associations welfare policy with racial considerations in white Americans' minds (e.g., Gilens 1999; Quadagno 1994). Similarly, criminal justice policymaking has been associated with race, and white public opinion on crime is importantly associated with racial considerations (e.g., Hurwitz and Peffley 1997; Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman 1997). However, race can do even more. This article develops the idea that the political, social, and psychological centrality of race in contemporary American society should allow the "race coding" of policy and opinion to extend further than this scholarship suggests.

I begin by presenting a theoretical account of the conditions under which political rhetoric will unconsciously engage people's ideas about race, even without any explicit racial words or pictures. Next, I review the dominant issue frames that have surrounded the public discussions of Social Security and suggest that those frames should meet the conditions necessary to forge symbolic, implicit links between Social Security and people's ideas about race. In the heart of the article, I then draw on two decades of public opinion data to demonstrate empirically that this has, in fact, happened. Finally, I conclude with some observations about the significance of these findings and avenues for further research.

Theory

I use the term "group implication" to refer to the process that associates political issues—jointly in political discourse and in citizens' minds—with considerations of race. The term "implication" suggests the generality of the phenomenon: racialization is just one example of a general process whereby ideas about social groups can influence public opinion. In addition, the term makes clear that the process need not be explicit. That is, the political rhetoric on a policy need not refer openly to race, and individuals need not be aware of the role played by race in their opinions.

Mechanisms of and Conditions Governing Group Implication

An interaction between psychological *schemas* and rhetorical *frames* governs this process. Schemas are "cognitive structure[s] that represent knowledge about a concept" (Fiske and Taylor 1991, 98). They process, store, and organize information and serve as "subjective theories" about the social world (Markus and Zajonc 1985, 145). These structures play an active role in perception and cognition and allow one to "go beyond the information given" (Bruner 1957), thereby suggesting bases for evaluation. Schemas play a vital role in the perception of ambiguous phenomena, including political issues. When a person encounters a political issue, some schema is brought to bear to understand it; that schema then influences the basis for evaluating the issue (Fiske and Linville 1980; Smith 1998; on use in political cognition research, Conover and Feldman 1984; Kuklinski, Luskin, and Bolland 1991; Lodge et al. 1991).

An issue frame is "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue" (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 143). As this definition suggests, many analysts examine the surface content of frames: a frame can suggest explicitly that we should view an issue in certain terms. I suggest that frames can also work at an *implicit* level to evoke a particular schema, which then influences the perception and evaluation of the issue. A successful issue frame of this sort structures an issue in such a way that people are more likely to use a particular schema to understand it; an issue frame fails when it does not induce people to use that schema. Insofar as a rhetorical issue frame is congruent with a particular schema, that frame will "work." In a sense, then, we can think of frames as the rhetorical analog of cognitive schemas.

Schemas consist of both attributes that describe the domain in question and a structure that positions those attributes in relation to each other and which provides a basis for judgment. For example, white Americans' schemas for understanding race contain various *attributes* of racial groups, including those drawn from common cultural stereotypes: that whites are rich, that blacks are athletic, that discrimination occurs against blacks, that whites are hard working, that blacks are lazy, and so on.[1] For some, this schema includes a structural linkage that suggests that blacks are poor *because* discrimination against blacks occurs; others' racial schemas include a different structural

[1]Note that Devine (1989) shows that high-prejudiced and low-prejudiced people are equally aware of cultural stereotypes.

link that suggests whites are rich because they work hard and blacks are poor because they are lazy (Wittenbrink, Gist, and Hilton 1997). This variation in schematic structure will lead to variation in the evaluations people make about a situation that they perceive in terms of the race schema. Wittenbrink and colleagues conducted an intriguing experiment that shows how schematic structure can drive evaluations of situations that are—on their surface—quite removed from the schema (Wittenbrink, Gist, and Hilton 1997). Subjects watched a series of animated videos involving the interaction of a single fish with a larger group of fish. These videos involved conflict between the fish and the group, but were ambiguous as to the individual fish's and the group's motivations. The crucial finding was that subjects' racial schemas affected their interpretations of the videos. Subjects who believe blacks are poor because they don't work hard tended to hold the individual fish responsible for the interactions; those who believe blacks' position is due to discrimination held the group responsible. The structural fit between schema and video was crucial: racial schemas did *not* influence interpretation of a different video that did not involve conflict between unequal groups of fish.

This demonstrates that a schema can influence evaluation of a situation that bears little or no surface resemblance to the contents of the schema. This occurs through a process of analogical reasoning: the single fish is "black," the fish in the group are "white." Once this analogical mapping takes place, subjects then also map their feelings about human race relations to the domain of interaction among the fish.[2] On the other hand, when subjects saw a video with a different structure (no conflict), they did not apply the schema, because the structure of fish interaction differed from the structure of the race schema, so no analogical mapping could take place.

My argument is that this process also occurs in political cognition. For this to happen, the structure of the schema must fit, or be congruent with, the issue as political rhetoric frames it. That is, the schema and frame must share the same *structure*.[3] When an issue frame structures an issue in a way congruent with a particular schema, then that schema will govern the perception and evaluation of the issue.

Race Schema Structure

This means that the structure of Americans' race schemas is crucial, because the match—or lack of match—between this structure and issue frames determines whether race implication takes place.[4] I focus on three central aspects of the race schema: the centrality of the ingroup/outgroup distinction, the set of characteristics ascribed to the in- and outgroups, and the variation in attributions (and therefore evaluations) regarding those characteristics.

The first major element of the racial schema is the division of the world into ingroup and outgroup. The tendency to categorize social groups in these terms is psychologically central (Sherif 1988; Tajfel 1982), and although an us/them distinction is not unique to racial schemas, it is an important component (e.g., Hamilton and Trolier 1986; Hirschfeld 1996). White Americans who view the world through the race schema see social groups as importantly divided into ingroups and outgroups—into "us" and "them."

Second, the white-black racial schema is more than just ingroup and outgroup: these groups come with attributes. As I mention above, these include the familiar stereotypes of blacks as lazy, dependent, poor, and potentially subject to discrimination; and of whites as hard-working, independent, well-off, and potentially prejudiced (Fiske 1998; e.g., Devine 1989; Dovidio, Evans, and Tyler 1986; McCabe and Brannon 2004). These associations have deep roots. Work—and the independent ownership of the fruits of that labor—has historically been at the center of what it has meant to be white in America (Harris 1995; Roediger 1999), and it is by contrast with "black" that the category "white" has evolved over time (Brodkin 1998; Warren and Twine 1997). For whites, these attributes add to the perceived contrast between racial in- and outgroups as well as reinforcing ingroup favoritism.

Finally, the race schema includes a set of causal attributions that link ideas about work, success, and prejudice and discrimination. These attributions fall into

[2]Some cognitive psychologists argue that exactly this sort of analogical or metaphorical reasoning is central to human cognition (Gentner, Holyoak, and Kokinov 2001; Holyoak and Thagard 1995; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Ortony 1993).

[3]This corresponds to the findings on the use of analogies in problem that emphasize the role of structural similarity between source and target domains (Gentner 1983; Gentner, Rattermann, and Forbus 1993; Gick and Holyoak 1983).

[4]This discussion and analysis focuses on the schema for *black–white* race relations in contemporary America. As I discuss below, there are good reasons to expect this schema—as opposed to a more general, multiracial one—to be important for political cognition. Nevertheless, an important avenue for future research is on the effects of racial contexts in society on racial schemas and therefore on issue racialization.

one of two basic patterns. On the one hand are racial conservatives,[5] who attribute inequalities in outcomes between ingroup and outgroup to individual-level factors such as merit and effort. This "color-blind" perspective denies that race in and of itself means anything, and believe, therefore, African Americans *could* do just as well as whites, if they would only work harder (Gotanda 1995; see also Brown 2003; Bonilla-Silva 2003). On the other hand are racial liberals, who attribute these inequalities to discrimination and racism, rather than to individual merit or effort; differences are due, in other words, to the continuing effects of historical and current barriers faced by African Americans in American society.

Thus, Americans' racial schemas include implicit arguments about *why* unequal outcomes occur that draw on common stereotypes about black and white Americans. Racial conservatives trace the shortcomings of the outgroup to the failures its individual members. They get what they deserve, because they fail to live up to proper standards: in particular, those who fail are likely lazy and dependent, and claims of discrimination are simply an excuse for personal failings. Conversely, the ingroup members' individual hard work explains their success. Racial liberals, in contrast, trace the outgroup's shortcomings to a different set of stereotypical attributes, such as malicious action or neglect by the ingroup, or institutionally racist practices. Conversely, they do not attribute the ingroup's successes to individual moral superiority. For racial liberals, individual-level attributions for the outgroup's failures amount to blaming the victim.

And, of course, individuals can fall somewhere in between these two ideal types—that is, Americans' racial schemas vary along a dimension that answers the question of why blacks and whites do not achieve equal outcomes. Aside from this variation, however, the race schema should be reasonably homogenous among white Americans, who are all socialized to understand race similarly, are immersed in a relatively consistent culture and are exposed to largely the same media. Different people will vary in their location on the evaluative continuum—from racial conservatism to racial liberalism—but they should share the same basic schematic structure.[6]

Moreover, political discourse has exposed white Americans to this way of understanding race for over 30 years. Citizens have therefore learned to use it to judge racial issues, to understand political campaigns, and to think about domestic politics generally (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Edsall and Edsall 1992; Kinder and Sanders 1996). Therefore, I expect that this schema, or interpretive lens, should help people understand even issues that have nothing to do with race, as long as they are framed to fit the schema. A frame will create this fit when it emphasizes an "us–them" distinction and links the in- and outgroups with attributes and arguments from the racial schema. The key is not that race be mentioned explicitly in conjunction with an issue. Rather, the racial reference is in the *structure* of the appeal: the us–them dynamic, attributions regarding work and outcomes, and the invocation of a standard of judgment that symbolically links with traditional stereotypes.

In the next section, I discuss the frames used describe Social Security in public discourse, and trace the ways that these frames should associate the program with whiteness, in a mirror-image of the association of welfare with blackness.

Framing Social Security

The initial design of Social Security policy *did* incorporate race. Various workers—most notably farm laborers—were excluded from Social Security to secure support by southern senators (on the history of Social Security, see Derthick 1979). However, implementation has become less racialized over time, as coverage has expanded. Importantly for my argument, though, the public discourse on Social Security has not been explicitly racial. In contrast to coverage of welfare or crime, the public is not receiving messages that suggest—explicitly at least—that Social Security disproportionately assists white Americans over other racial groups.[7] This may be partly due to the relative

[5] I use the terms "racially conservative" and "racially liberal" to refer to the two ends of the continuum of racial predispositions in order to avoid necessarily associating racially conservative positions with prejudice. Prejudice certainly underlies these beliefs for some whites but considerations of principle may underlie them for others (e.g., Sniderman and Carmines 1997). However, it is important to note that this is conceptually distinct from *political* conservatism and liberalism.

[6] Devine's work on race schemas supports this idea (1989). She shows that everyone is aware of the culture's race stereotypes; differences in prejudiced *behavior* stem from the fact that some people consciously counteract the effects of the stereotypes on their perceptions and evaluations. On the other hand, we should not necessarily expect non-white Americans to understand race in the same terms. The spatial and task segregation involved in American race relations allows for rather different understandings of race to evolve among whites and blacks (Dawson 1994, 2001; Jackman 1994; Sigelman and Welch 1991). The analysis in this article focuses on whites; clearly, additional research on group implication among nonwhites is needed.

[7] In fact, Clawson finds that the pictures of beneficiaries associated with national newsmagazine coverage of Social Security from 1992 through 2002 parallel the actual racial composition of recipients (and, therefore, of America as a whole): about 87% white, 10% African American, and 4% other (2003).

invisibility of whiteness for most white Americans; nevertheless, it means there is no explicit link between Social Security and race. However, the ways that politicians and the media discuss Social Security align it *structurally* with the racial schema that I discuss above.

Policymakers have been centrally concerned with the public's image of Social Security since its inception. Derthick argues that "one of the most conspicuous features of policymaking for Social Security is the preoccupation of policymakers with public psychology. They have been enormously concerned with the public's perceptions and subjective experience of the program" (1979, 183). In perhaps one of the earliest examples of "crafted talk" (Jacobs and Shapiro 2000) by leaders, those who designed and implemented Social Security chose their words carefully to help shape opinion in favor of the program. The framing choices they made—likely unintentionally—laid the groundwork for racialized public opinion.

The Social Insurance Frame

The creators of Social Security worked hard to frame it as an individual insurance program.

> "Insurance" was the central symbol of [official discourse on Social Security], and it was stressed precisely because it was expected to secure public acceptance. Because insurance implied a return for work and investment, it preserved the self-respect of the beneficiaries; because it implied a return in proportion to investment, it satisfied a widely held conception of fairness; and because it implied the existence of a contract, it appeared sound and certain. (Derthick 1979, 198–99)

All aspects of the program were—and generally still are—discussed in terms of this frame. Social Security taxes are called "contributions," there is talk of "old age insurance accounts" in Baltimore, and people are told that they are "paying for their own protection." Senator Goldwater stated in congressional debate in 1972 that "Social Security payments are not gratuities from a benevolent central government. They are essentially a repayment of our own earnings" (cited in Tynes 1996, 191). This impression is further reinforced by the annual statements that the Social Security Administration began mailing to taxpayers in 1999.

In an entirely typical example, President Ford reinforced the link with work and individual contribution: "We must begin by insuring that the Social Security system is beyond challenge. [It is] a vital obligation each generation has to those who have worked hard and contributed to it all their lives" (United States Social Security Administration 2000, 16).

The contrast with other social welfare programs was explicit from the beginning, as is made clear by this passage from President Roosevelt's 1935 message to Congress: ". . . continued dependence on relief induces a spiritual and moral disintegration fundamentally destructive to the national fibre. To dole out relief in this way is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit." Social insurance programs, on the other hand, "because they are based on regular contributions and on disbursements closely related to the amount contributed, derive their social legitimacy from the achievements of beneficiaries" (quoted in Schiltz 1970, 30). Robert Ball, a former Social Security commissioner and long-time advocate, summarized the link with work and the contrast with other programs in 1998:

> [I]t is an *earned* right, with eligibility for benefits and the benefit rate based on an individual's past earnings. This principle sharply distinguishes Social Security from welfare and links the program, appropriately, to other earned rights such as wages, fringe benefits, and private pensions. (Ball and Bethell 1998, 60)

This frame aligns Social Security with the racial schema in two ways. First, it associates Social Security with exactly the white-linked attributes of the racial schema: work and just reward, and associates the program with the sort of individual attribution favored by racial conservatives. Second, it sets up a sharp contrast with other social welfare programs, which tie benefits to need, rather than to individual contributions and merit.

This symbolic contrast between Social Security and welfare mirrors the contrast between whiteness and blackness in the race schema, and the link with symbolically white attributes associates Social Security with the white ingroup. The argument that Social Security represents insurance based on one's individual effort and commensurate with one's prior contributions maps precisely onto the conservative account of racial inequality. Other things being equal, then, this Social Security frame should attach Social Security recipients to the conservative end of the racial evaluative dimension, in an exact inversion of the connection between welfare recipients and the liberal end of the same dimension. This frame should resonate particularly for those who hold conservative racial beliefs, and it should attract them to Social Security. Racial liberals, on the other hand, will find Social Security somewhat

less attractive than they otherwise might, because their racial schema attaches negative affect to the conservative constellation of beliefs.

The Ingroup Linkage

Social Security is also associated rhetorically with ingroups, again precisely opposite the ways that welfare is linked with outgroups. This further solidifies the links to characteristics of whiteness, at least among white Americans. This connection is facilitated by the fact that old age, unlike poverty, is something that everyone hopes and expects to experience. This means that people are less likely to view the elderly as a "special interest"; they are the ultimate ingroup, ourselves in a few years (e.g., Tynes 1996, 210). This gives politicians and Social Security officials a strong incentive to emphasize this ingroup association. In a 1998 resource kit designed to help local Social Security offices develop information campaigns, for example, there is great emphasis on conveying the message that it is important for everyone to pay attention to Social Security, because it "affects everyone," not just the elderly (United States Social Security Administration 1998).

Political leaders also deploy this frame frequently. For example, after attempting to cut Social Security in 1981—which was widely understood as hurting Republicans in the 1982 mid-term elections, leading to the metaphor of Social Security as the "third rail" of American politics—Ronald Reagan moved quickly back to more traditional rhetoric that implicitly distinguished Social Security from other social programs. At a January 1983 fundraiser, for example, he referred to Social Security recipients in the first person for the first time, arguing that "[if Congress acts], all American can rest assured that the pensions of *our elderly* both now and in the future, will be secure."[8] In addition, he began equating Social Security with the national good generally, as when he argued in his 1983 State of the Union address that the recent efforts to shore up Social Security "proved that, when it comes to the national welfare, Americans can still pull together for the common good." This is in stark contrast to his references to beneficiaries of other social program in the same address. For example, on food stamp reform he said that "our standard here will be fairness, ensuring that the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars go only to the truly needy; that none of them are turned away, but that fraud and waste are stamped out." Throughout 1983, Reagan continued to refer to "our elderly," "our senior citizens," and the common good when discussing Social Security, and to "those people" when discussing food stamps and welfare.

Comments by Newt Gingrich to the Republican Caucus in 1998 demonstrate this same theme. "Do we take seriously the responsibility to the baby boomers and their children to save Social Security in a way which is fair to every generation? That saves my mother and mother-in-law, that saves the baby boomers, and that is fair to younger Americans?" He implicitly contrasts other social welfare programs, which serve the outgroup, saying that welfare reform is "moving them into prosperity and giving them a chance to earn the work ethic and to learn how to manage their own budgets and to have a chance for their children to have a dramatically better future."

Social Security in Peril

The final important frame has been the vulnerability of Social Security. By the early 1970s, declining fertility rates and the aging of the Baby Boom generation combined to jeopardize the long-run actuarial balance between payroll tax contributions to Social Security by current workers and the payment of benefits to current retirees. There has been a steady political discourse over the perilous condition of the program and the urgency of "saving Social Security," much of it sparked by regular reports on when the trust fund will run dry, and much of it focusing on which political leaders can best be trusted to protect the program.[9]

There is considerable evidence that perceptions of threat both lead people to exaggerate differences between ingroup and outgroup (Tajfel 1957, 1981) and increase the salience and impact of those predispositions on political attitudes and behavior (Doty, Peterson, and Winter 1991; Feldman and Stenner 1997; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Lavine et al. 1999; Stenner 2005; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982). Thus, insofar as Social Security is a program that white Americans associate implicitly with their racial ingroup, framing that emphasizes threat from bankruptcy may well increase the impact of their racial predispositions on their evaluation of Social Security. While we might not expect this frame by itself to associate the program with race, we *should* expect it to increase the sense of threat felt by white Americans, insofar

[8] From Reagan's remarks at a fundraising dinner for Senator Charles Percy, in Chicago, January 19, 1983. Emphasis added.

[9] Although conventional wisdom holds that the American public has little and declining confidence in the Social Security system, there is little evidence that this is actually the case. The public's confidence in the long-term solvency of Social Security is mixed and has increased somewhat from its low point in the 1970s (Baggette, Shapiro, and Jacobs 1995); see also Cook and Jacobs (2002); Jacobs and Shapiro (1998); Shaw and Mysiewicz (2004).

as they associate Social Security with the ingroup. That increased threat, in turn, should increase the salience of the racial schema for thinking about Social Security, and thereby reinforce racial implication.

Empirical Expectations

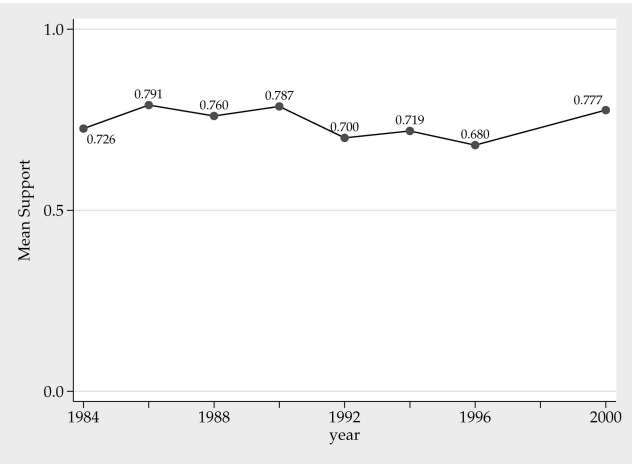
I have argued that the frames used to discuss Social Security should resonate with white Americans' racial schemas. My expectation, therefore, is that white Americans' racial predispositions should influence their opinions on Social Security, in the direction opposite that observed for welfare. Holding all else constant, racial conservatives should be relatively more supportive of Social Security, compared with racial liberals. Moreover, because Social Security is associated with whiteness rather than blackness, I expect this racialization to operate in particular through feelings about the white ingroup. I expect whites who feel warmer toward and closer to their own racial group to be relatively more supportive of Social Security, again compared to those who feel cooler and less close. Finally, I expect this racialization to be fairly constant over time, because the frames that racialize Social Security have themselves remained in consistent use over the past several decades.

I confine my expectations (and analysis) to whites for several reasons. First, nonwhites' racial schemas likely differ from whites', and so racialization would operate differently (see footnote 6). More importantly, the rhetoric that frames Social Security as a program for the ingroup does so in terms of an implicitly *white* ingroup. The "us" who deserve Social Security in return for hard work is symbolically white, and the characteristics associated with Social Security recipients, such as hard work and self reliance, are stereotypically associated with whiteness.

Social Security Opinion

My analyses make use of the excellent data available from the National Election Studies (NES) because they include consistent measures of Social Security opinion, racial predispositions, and important control variables over the course of two decades. I measure Social Security opinion with the relevant item from the NES spending battery, which asks respondents to indicate, for each of a series of programs, whether federal spending should be increased, kept the same, or decreased. In addition to appearing frequently, this item has the advantage of being quite general. Rather than asking about the details of program administration, viability, or particular reforms, this question taps people's general feelings or approval for the program at a fairly abstract level.[10]

FIGURE 1 Mean Support for Social Security Spending among White Americans, 1984–2000



Source: National Election Studies. Graph is of mean support for spending among white respondents. Variable is coded from zero (decrease spending) to 0.5 (keep the same) to one (increase).

Social Security is a popular program. On a scale from zero to one, support for Social Security spending averages 0.745 (standard deviation of 0.287), or just about exactly midway between the "increase" and "keep it the same" responses. As Figure 1 demonstrates, opinion has varied a bit, with support increasing in the mid-1980s and falling in the late 1990s, but on the whole opinion has been rather stable. While high, these levels of support for spending are not unique. White Americans are slightly more supportive of spending on crime control (overall mean of 0.80 over the same period) and on schools (mean of 0.78). In contrast—and not surprisingly—support for spending on welfare and on food stamps is much lower among whites (average of 0.31 and 0.38, respectively).

Measurement of Racial Predispositions

Ideally, measures of racial predispositions would capture the relevant features of whites' racial schemas. This would include measures of the importance that whites place on

[10]The item does some violence to the realities of Social Security policymaking, since spending on the program is not discretionary in the same way that it is for some of the other programs in the spending battery. For my purposes, however, this is a strength, precisely because it avoids the complications of Social Security policymaking and taps respondents' general approval of the program.

the ingroup/outgroup distinction, the sorts of attributions they make for those sorts of unequal outcomes, the degree of favoritism they display for the ingroup, and their attributions of stereotypical traits to the ingroup and outgroup.

In the analysis that follows, I make use of three different measures, each with advantages and disadvantages. The first is the so-called thermometer ratings of whites and of blacks as groups. These have several advantages: first, ratings of both whites and of blacks are available in most NES studies since their inauguration in 1964, so they facilitate comparisons over time. Most importantly, they distinguish between the racial ingroup and the outgroup, so they allow me to assess the degree to which a policy is associated with one group or the other in addition to whether the policy is simply racialized. That is, because the frames depict Social Security as a policy that benefits and rewards the (implicitly white) ingroup, I expect that racialization will take place particularly with regard to feelings about *whites* as a group as opposed to feelings about blacks. Other things being equal, respondents who feel more warmly toward whites should favor greater Social Security spending. In addition, the thermometer ratings are completely devoid of explicit policy content, so they likely tap relatively directly into feelings about the two racial groups themselves.

This generality also leads, however, to the primary weakness of the thermometers, that they do not measure very specifically the structure of the race schema. In addition, the thermometer ratings are subject to social desirability and to response set (Wilcox, Sigelman, and Cook 1989; Winter and Berinsky 1999); this is particularly a concern when measuring racial predispositions, which are subject to powerful egalitarian norms (e.g., Mendelberg 2001). Therefore, I supplement the thermometer ratings with a pair of questions, which appear periodically in the NES, and that ask respondent to rate whites and blacks as hard-working, lazy, or somewhere in between.[11] As I discuss above, the stereotype that whites are hard-working and blacks are lazy is an important part of the racial schema, and the framing of Social Security has emphasized its connection with work. Therefore, I would expect that respondents who endorse the stereotype of whites being particularly hard-working should be more supportive of Social Security.

Finally, in several studies the NES measures racial resentment, which was developed expressly to capture the complex ways that ideas about race have been enmeshed in modern political rhetoric (Kinder and Sanders 1996). The four items in the scale tap into the elements of the schema in relatively subtle ways, allowing respondents to indicate how they feel about the trade-offs between individual effort and the effects of discrimination and structural barriers.[12] Racial resentment measures whites' racial schemas with more subtly and less social desirability bias than the other available items; it is also a multiple-item scale with proven validity and reliability. This scale's disadvantage is that it does not distinguish between the role played by ingroup and outgroup associations cementing racial implication of a policy. The items themselves focus on blacks in particular, although two of the items (the first and third) do draw a contrast between blacks and whites.

The race schema, however, does not consist of entirely independent beliefs and feelings about whites and about blacks. Rather, black and white are linked together and take meaning precisely through the contrast of superior and inferior groups. To say that "they" are violent and lazy is implicitly to suggest that "we" are peaceful and hard-working; insofar as welfare is a program associated with "them," then contrasting Social Security with welfare will implicitly associate it with "us." I therefore expect racial resentment—which measures in part the degree to which white Americans think of racial matters in terms of work, just reward, and the contrast between whites and blacks—to pick up the racialization of Social Security as I describe it above. Neither racial resentment nor the stereotype measures are available in all years. Therefore, I use the thermometer ratings as my primary measure, supplemented with the others when they are available in order to ensure that the basic results are not driven by some quirk of the thermometer rating scale.

Control Variables

The model also includes a series of control variables that are related to opinion and also likely correlated with racial predispositions. In addition to ensuring unbiased estimates, the role played by these other variables is interesting in its own right; I will discuss some of those effects in the material that follows. These measures include self- or

[11] The questions ask respondents to rate whites and blacks (along with Asian and Hispanic Americans), in turn, on a 7-point scale that ranges from "hard working" to "lazy."

[12] The racial resentment battery asks respondents how much they agree or disagree with each of the following: (1) "Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors," (2) "Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class," (3) "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites," and (4) "Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve."

group-interest in Social Security, including class (income and education),[13] age and age over 65, and retired status. I also included political views and demographic characteristics, including partisanship, ideology, retrospective economic evaluations, living in the south, and gender.[14]

Finally, I include measures of two important political principles or values: egalitarianism and support for limited government. For egalitarianism, I use the six-item scale developed by Feldman (Feldman 1988; Feldman and Zaller 1992). For limited government, I construct a scale from two items that assess support for government effort in specific programmatic areas: the first asks respondents to indicate the degree to which the government should see to it that all Americans have a job and a good standard of living, and the second asks respondents to evaluate the trade-off between the government supplying more services versus cutting spending.[15]

Because the spending variable is three-category ordered categorical, I estimated the model using ordered probit. The NES included the complete set of variables only for presidential years from 1984 through 2000, plus 1994, so my analysis focuses on those years.

Racialization Findings

Table 1 presents the basic ordered probit model. The first row of coefficients shows that white Americans who feel more warmly toward whites as a group are more supportive of Social Security spending, all other things held equal. The effect is smaller in 1984 (b = 0.264) and does not achieve statistical significance; from 1988 onward the effect is both substantively large and statistically significant, averaging 0.590.

The substantive effect the white thermometer ratings is demonstrated in Figure 2, which presents the predicted probability of selecting the highest response category (favoring increased spending), for otherwise average respondents whose rating of whites ranges from 0 to 100. In 1984, the difference in probabilities between respondents who rate whites at 0 and at 100 is about 0.10—a relatively moderate impact. From 1988 onwards, the effect is at large—the probability of favoring increased spending is between 0.20 and 0.26 higher among those most favorable toward whites. Turning to the thermometer ratings of blacks, Table 1 indicates that feeling warmly toward blacks, as measured by thermometer ratings, is associated with opposition to Social Security spending in five of the six years, although as expected, the effect is substantively smaller and more variable and achieves statistical significance only twice.

Another way to assess the substantive impact of this racialization is to compare it with estimates of welfare racialization drawn from analogous models. The welfare spending item was included in the NES from 1992 through 2000; models for these years appear in Table 2. From this perspective, Social Security's racialization is about as strong as welfare's, although its roots differ. For welfare, feelings about blacks drive racialization. Across the four years, the average coefficient for the black thermometer rating 0.655. For Social Security, the racialization is of roughly similar magnitude, albeit largely through the thermometer rating of whites.

The comparable magnitude of these effects is reinforced by Figure 3, which shows the predicted probabilities of favoring *decreased* welfare spending for an otherwise average white American, whose thermometer rating of blacks varies from 0 to 100. As the thermometer rating of blacks increases from 0 to 100, the probability of supporting cuts to welfare drops by about 0.25.

Some of the other results from the Social Security model are also interesting. First, support for egalitarianism is generally positively associated with Social Security opinion, but this association is relatively small and uneven from year to year and hovers on the edge of statistical significance. This contrasts with welfare, support for which is strongly and consistently associated with egalitarianism. This makes sense in terms of the different framing of the two programs: Social Security is earned, whereas welfare is a matter of need. It makes sense, then, that feelings

[13]Income is entered as a set of dummy variables corresponding to percentiles of the income distribution in each year, in order to maintain comparability across years. Education is entered as a series of dummy variables corresponding to grade school, some high school, high-school graduation, some college, and BA or more education.

[14]Partisanship is entered as a set of dummy variables corresponding to the NES 7-point scale; ideology as dummy variables for liberal, conservative, and not ascertained. Variation in the operationalization of these measures makes no difference to the racialization results. Results are identical when controls for urban and rural residence are included; these variables were omitted from the analyses presented here because they are not available for half of the respondents in 2000.

[15]The NES sometimes includes a three-item scale that measures support for limited government; unfortunately these items do not appear before 1990 (Markus 1989, 2001). The pair of items I employ are less abstract than those in the Markus scale, and some might argue that they represent policy opinion variables. However, there is precedent for using them as a predisposition (Kinder and Sanders 1996). Moreover, their use is conservative. Insofar as the scale picks up policy preferences beyond principled feelings about government, the additional variance may come at the expense of the measures of racial predispositions. Note that for respondents who answered only one of the two limited government items (between 10 and 20% in each study), I imputed scores based on the item they did answer. In any case, the substantive findings are the same when I substitute a dummy variable for these cases and when I substitute the abstract measure for the two-item scale.

TABLE 1 Racialization of Social Security Opinion 1984–2000, among Whites

	Social Security Spending					
Variable	**1984**	**1988**	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**2000**
Thermometer Rating of Whites	0.264	0.539**	0.603**	0.528*	0.611*	0.667*
	(0.223)	(0.204)	(0.198)	(0.228)	(0.259)	(0.264)
Thermometer Rating of Blacks	−0.040	−0.002	−0.409*	0.108	−0.227	−0.753**
	(0.205)	(0.203)	(0.196)	(0.199)	(0.261)	(0.259)
Egalitarianism	0.381^	0.241	0.392*	0.225	−0.043	0.746**
	(0.206)	(0.213)	(0.179)	(0.219)	(0.219)	(0.230)
Limited Government	−1.044**	−0.878**	−0.972**	−1.310**	−1.692**	−1.324**
	(0.184)	(0.193)	(0.166)	(0.196)	(0.216)	(0.194)
Live in South	−0.019	0.079	−0.028	0.055	−0.025	0.021
	(0.078)	(0.084)	(0.072)	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.088)
Strong Democrat	−0.034	0.062	0.124	−0.213	0.317^	0.190
	(0.141)	(0.156)	(0.128)	(0.159)	(0.167)	(0.167)
Democrat	−0.016	−0.002	0.154	0.010	0.256^	0.218
	(0.131)	(0.146)	(0.121)	(0.142)	(0.154)	(0.168)
Ind-Lean Democrat	−0.151	−0.088	0.004	−0.059	0.260	0.139
	(0.148)	(0.162)	(0.122)	(0.154)	(0.164)	(0.163)
Ind-Lean Republican	−0.292*	−0.075	−0.142	−0.063	0.337*	0.163
	(0.136)	(0.147)	(0.123)	(0.152)	(0.169)	(0.159)
Republican	−0.147	−0.192	0.011	−0.036	0.163	0.114
	(0.132)	(0.149)	(0.121)	(0.145)	(0.158)	(0.162)
Strong Republican	−0.285*	−0.188	−0.010	−0.147	−0.037	−0.000
	(0.140)	(0.153)	(0.131)	(0.149)	(0.170)	(0.166)
Retrospective Economic Evaluations	−0.452**	−0.208	−0.089	−0.416**	−0.357*	0.114
	(0.151)	(0.171)	(0.144)	(0.150)	(0.174)	(0.144)
Age	0.050	0.035	0.282	0.231	0.623^	0.664^
	(0.303)	(0.329)	(0.297)	(0.339)	(0.354)	(0.386)
Age over 65	−0.307^	−0.421*	−0.482**	0.029	−0.259	−0.415*
	(0.158)	(0.164)	(0.141)	(0.162)	(0.164)	(0.165)
Retired	−0.038	0.121	0.033	−0.172	−0.086	0.054
	(0.145)	(0.149)	(0.125)	(0.142)	(0.141)	(0.141)
Income <15pct	0.170	0.220^	0.195^	0.131	−0.013	−0.274^
	(0.128)	(0.131)	(0.114)	(0.120)	(0.125)	(0.150)
Income 16–33pct	0.158	−0.001	0.150	0.046	−0.068	−0.239
	(0.109)	(0.120)	(0.099)	(0.111)	(0.117)	(0.145)
Income 67–95pct	−0.035	−0.007	−0.089	0.103	−0.103	−0.141
	(0.084)	(0.088)	(0.078)	(0.089)	(0.092)	(0.100)
Income 96+pct	−0.234	0.041	−0.389**	−0.262	−0.302^	−0.307
	(0.144)	(0.204)	(0.142)	(0.174)	(0.166)	(0.190)
Income NA	0.161	−0.175	−0.036	0.057	0.001	−0.365**
	(0.131)	(0.151)	(0.136)	(0.154)	(0.142)	(0.135)
Grade School	−0.186	0.205	0.229	0.031	0.366	0.758*
	(0.154)	(0.167)	(0.157)	(0.199)	(0.242)	(0.378)
Some HS	0.155	−0.028	0.263*	0.176	0.148	−0.100
	(0.129)	(0.142)	(0.119)	(0.136)	(0.145)	(0.210)
Some College	−0.189*	−0.117	−0.098	−0.205*	−0.088	−0.077
	(0.084)	(0.095)	(0.082)	(0.092)	(0.127)	(0.110)

(continued on next page)

TABLE 1 Racialization of Social Security Opinion 1984–2000, among Whites *(continued)*

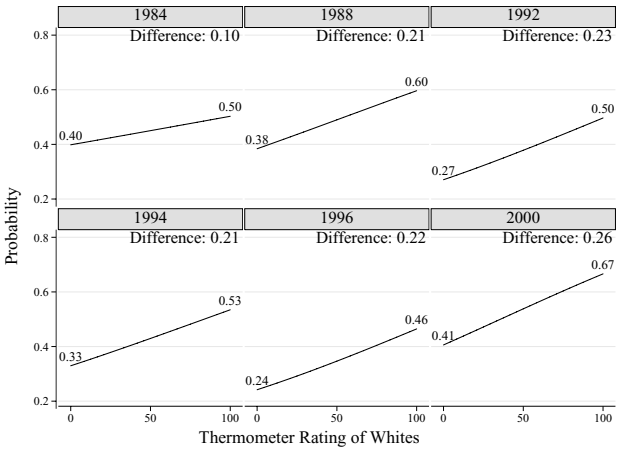
	Social Security Spending					
Variable	**1984**	**1988**	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**2000**
BA+	−0.462**	−0.227*	−0.447**	−0.661**	−0.485**	−0.361**
	(0.096)	(0.099)	(0.085)	(0.098)	(0.087)	(0.112)
Ideology Liberal	0.081	0.047	−0.202*	−0.093	−0.317**	−0.035
	(0.103)	(0.116)	(0.096)	(0.120)	(0.116)	(0.122)
Ideology Conservative	0.008	−0.198*	−0.104	−0.177^	−0.130	0.100
	(0.091)	(0.097)	(0.085)	(0.093)	(0.101)	(0.112)
Ideology NA	0.165	0.122	0.070	0.074	0.141	0.240^
	(0.101)	(0.109)	(0.097)	(0.114)	(0.119)	(0.123)
Female	0.131^	0.310**	0.270**	0.192**	0.145*	0.353**
	(0.069)	(0.074)	(0.063)	(0.072)	(0.073)	(0.081)
Cut One	−2.627**	−2.154**	−1.992**	−2.431**	−2.377**	−1.782**
	(0.301)	(0.314)	(0.258)	(0.320)	(0.337)	(0.338)
Cut Two	−0.526^	−0.167	0.076	−0.445	−0.423	−0.112
	(0.293)	(0.308)	(0.253)	(0.313)	(0.330)	(0.333)
N	1437	1255	1629	1306	1190	1051
Log Likelihood	−1059.07	−913.01	−1238.53	−971.94	−934.92	−767.92
χ^2	249.14	178.10	293.05	302.10	274.53	202.97
Degrees of Freedom	28	28	28	28	28	28

Source: National Election Studies.
Note: Cell entries are ordered probit coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.
**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ^p < 0.10, two-tailed.

about inequality are more strongly tied to welfare opinion. Second, opposition to expansive government action in the social realm is strongly and consistently associated with opposition to Social Security spending in particular. Again, this is as we would expect—insofar as people support government activism in general, that support extends to Social Security spending.

The measures of self- and group-interest are associated weakly, if at all, with Social Security opinion. Retirees are no more supportive of Social Security spending, and being over age 65 is actually *negatively* associated with Social Security spending preferences. While this might seem counterintuitive, it is in fact consistent with prior research.[16] Similarly, social class location is only mildly related to opinion; the only clear effect is that those with college degrees are consistently somewhat less supportive of Social Security spending. In all, these results conform to

FIGURE 2 Predicted Probability of Supporting Increased Social Security Spending among White Americans, 1984–2000



Source: National Election Studies. Figure displays the predicted probability of supporting increased Social Security spending for an otherwise-average white respondent whose thermometer rating of whites varies from zero to 100, based on the model presented in Table 1. Labeled points correspond to thermometer ratings of zero and 100, with the difference between those probabilities indicated in each plot.

[16]Prior research has found that the elderly are less supportive of Social Security, compared with younger Americans, and that various measures of imputed self-interest are inconsistently associated with opinion on Social Security (Day 1990; Plutzer and Berkman 2005; Ponza et al. 1988; Rhodebeck 1993). This reinforces the basic point that inferring people's perceptions of their self-interest from demographic characteristics is difficult at best (Chong, Citrin, and Conley 2001).

TABLE 2 Racialization of Welfare Opinion among Whites, 1992–2000

	Welfare Spending			
Variable	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**2000**
Thermometer Rating of Whites	−0.109	0.091	−0.219	−0.742**
	(0.193)	(0.227)	(0.279)	(0.241)
Thermometer Rating of Blacks	0.584**	0.590**	0.694*	0.753**
	(0.191)	(0.203)	(0.286)	(0.237)
Egalitarianism	0.730**	0.825**	0.931**	0.932**
	(0.178)	(0.228)	(0.243)	(0.214)
Limited Government	−1.549**	−1.538**	−2.068**	−1.223**
	(0.163)	(0.193)	(0.225)	(0.173)
Live in South	−0.065	0.020	0.055	0.025
	(0.071)	(0.077)	(0.083)	(0.081)
Strong Democrat	−0.040	0.078	0.179	−0.144
	(0.121)	(0.150)	(0.170)	(0.147)
Democrat	−0.070	−0.055	0.234	−0.306*
	(0.115)	(0.134)	(0.159)	(0.150)
Ind-Lean Democrat	−0.127	−0.075	0.273	−0.045
	(0.115)	(0.147)	(0.167)	(0.145)
Ind-Lean Republican	−0.304*	−0.203	0.030	−0.195
	(0.122)	(0.151)	(0.184)	(0.145)
Republican	−0.180	0.013	0.030	−0.153
	(0.117)	(0.140)	(0.171)	(0.150)
Strong Republican	−0.400**	−0.320*	−0.322	−0.162
	(0.132)	(0.153)	(0.198)	(0.154)
Retrospective Economic Evaluations	0.081	−0.112	−0.287	−0.109
	(0.142)	(0.150)	(0.182)	(0.133)
Age	0.528^	0.394	0.026	0.691^
	(0.288)	(0.338)	(0.379)	(0.356)
Age over 65	−0.218	−0.297^	−0.014	−0.018
	(0.134)	(0.162)	(0.175)	(0.154)
Retired	0.092	0.256^	0.057	−0.160
	(0.118)	(0.144)	(0.152)	(0.134)
Income <15pct	0.351**	0.392**	0.281*	0.154
	(0.105)	(0.114)	(0.121)	(0.135)
Income 16–33pct	0.220*	0.129	−0.011	0.097
	(0.093)	(0.109)	(0.118)	(0.131)
Income 67–95pct	0.003	0.015	−0.253*	−0.165^
	(0.077)	(0.092)	(0.105)	(0.094)
Income 96+pct	−0.162	−0.129	−0.153	0.117
	(0.151)	(0.200)	(0.197)	(0.181)
Income NA	−0.086	0.138	0.202	−0.022
	(0.134)	(0.151)	(0.147)	(0.127)
Grade School	0.194	0.383*	0.235	−0.206
	(0.147)	(0.192)	(0.210)	(0.270)
Some HS	0.252*	0.142	0.080	−0.412*
	(0.107)	(0.125)	(0.142)	(0.188)
Some College	−0.113	−0.009	−0.049	−0.171^
	(0.080)	(0.092)	(0.140)	(0.099)

(continued on next page)

TABLE 2 Racialization of Welfare Opinion among Whites, 1992–2000 *(continued)*

	Welfare Spending			
Variable	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**2000**
BA+	0.119	−0.041	0.043	−0.108
	(0.085)	(0.101)	(0.096)	(0.103)
Ideology Liberal	0.064	0.227*	0.118	0.221*
	(0.092)	(0.115)	(0.117)	(0.111)
Ideology Conservative	−0.149^	−0.082	−0.202^	−0.067
	(0.083)	(0.095)	(0.108)	(0.106)
Ideology NA	−0.068	0.039	−0.246*	−0.006
	(0.091)	(0.106)	(0.117)	(0.110)
Female	0.061	0.091	−0.062	−0.083
	(0.062)	(0.073)	(0.078)	(0.076)
Cut One	−0.096	0.413	−0.192	−0.460
	(0.247)	(0.313)	(0.346)	(0.304)
Cut Two	1.265**	1.639**	1.167**	0.997**
	(0.248)	(0.316)	(0.348)	(0.304)
N	1608	1299	1190	1055
Log Likelihood	−1437.85	−1041.53	−852.34	−958.01
χ^2	356.09	322.87	354.06	182.79
Degrees of Freedom	28	28	28	28

Source: National Election Studies.
Note: Cell entries are ordered probit coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.
**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ^p < 0.10, two-tailed.

the typical pattern of weak linkages between self interest and public opinion (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Green and Cowden 1992; McConahay 1982; Sears et al. 1980; Sears, Hensler, and Speer 1979; Sen 1990).[17]

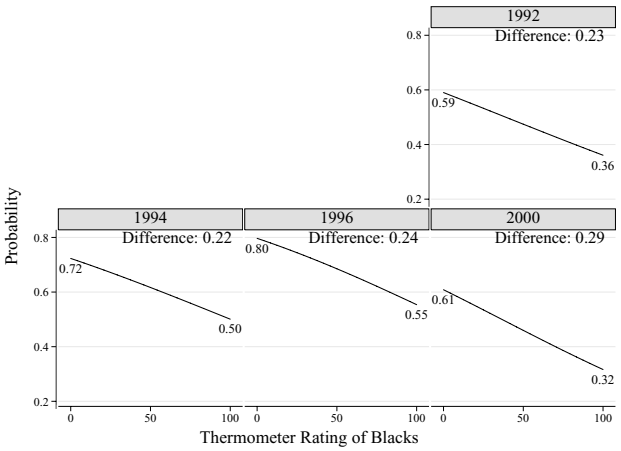
Overall, then, these results suggest that public opinion on Social Security spending is indeed racialized in the ways I expected. The association between feelings about whites and Social Security opinion is strong and consistent. This is strong evidence of racialization across independent samples of white Americans spanning different political contexts over two decades. This racialization is clear and strong from 1988 through 2000; it is somewhat weaker and not statistically significant in 1984.

Other Measures of the Racial Schema

Next, I turn to the other measures of the racial schema. First, Table 3 presents the results of an analysis that substitutes the stereotype measures for the thermometer ratings in 1992, 1996, and 2000. These results confirm the findings so far: white Americans racialize Social Security, and

[17]The 1992 NES asked respondents if they or a family member receives Social Security or Medicare payments; this measure of self interest was also essentially unrelated to opinion.

FIGURE 3 Predicted Probability of Supporting a Decrease in Welfare Spending among White Americans, 1992–2000



Source: National Election Studies. Figure displays the predicted probability of supporting decreased welfare spending for an otherwise-average white respondent whose thermometer rating of blacks varies from zero to 100, based on the model presented in Table 2. Labeled points correspond to thermometer ratings of zero and 100, with the difference between those probabilities indicated in each plot.

TABLE 3 Racialization of Social Security Opinion, Model with Hard-Working Stereotype

	Social Security Spending		
Variable	**1992**	**1996**	**2000**
Whites Hardworking	0.346*	0.404^	0.950**
	(0.169)	(0.207)	(0.210)
Blacks Hardworking	−0.382*	−0.319	−0.345
	(0.163)	(0.197)	(0.217)
Egalitarianism	0.332^	−0.039	0.611**
	(0.178)	(0.215)	(0.223)
Limited Government	−1.007**	−1.728**	−1.354**
	(0.167)	(0.214)	(0.194)
Live in South	−0.046	−0.003	0.023
	(0.071)	(0.077)	(0.085)
Strong Democrat	0.103	0.345*	0.187
	(0.129)	(0.164)	(0.165)
Democrat	0.151	0.264^	0.172
	(0.122)	(0.151)	(0.165)
Ind-Lean Democrat	0.007	0.295^	0.144
	(0.123)	(0.162)	(0.162)
Ind-Lean Republican	−0.171	0.323^	0.120
	(0.125)	(0.167)	(0.157)
Republican	0.004	0.158	0.084
	(0.122)	(0.155)	(0.160)
Strong Republican	−0.049	−0.041	−0.062
	(0.133)	(0.166)	(0.163)
Retrospective Economic Evaluations	−0.056	−0.364*	0.051
	(0.145)	(0.173)	(0.140)
Age	0.224	0.607^	0.467
	(0.298)	(0.353)	(0.378)
Age over 65	−0.413**	−0.271^	−0.381*
	(0.142)	(0.164)	(0.160)
Retired	−0.012	−0.072	0.090
	(0.126)	(0.140)	(0.137)
Income <15pct	0.250*	0.001	−0.287*
	(0.116)	(0.124)	(0.145)
Income 16–33pct	0.157	−0.063	−0.255^
	(0.098)	(0.116)	(0.143)
Income 67–95pct	−0.079	−0.085	−0.209*
	(0.078)	(0.092)	(0.100)
Income 96+pct	−0.377**	−0.294^	−0.374*
	(0.142)	(0.166)	(0.183)
Income NA	−0.023	0.024	−0.352**
	(0.136)	(0.141)	(0.131)
Grade School	0.217	0.321	0.828*
	(0.161)	(0.242)	(0.346)
Some HS	0.245*	0.141	−0.129
	(0.119)	(0.143)	(0.204)
Some College	−0.127	−0.083	−0.092
	(0.082)	(0.126)	(0.107)
BA+	−0.426**	−0.462**	−0.380**
	(0.086)	(0.087)	(0.109)
Ideology Liberal	−0.202*	−0.309**	−0.020
	(0.096)	(0.115)	(0.120)
Ideology Conservative	−0.100	−0.128	0.058
	(0.085)	(0.099)	(0.110)
Ideology NA	0.088	0.144	0.182
	(0.097)	(0.118)	(0.121)
Female	0.280**	0.145*	0.359**
	(0.063)	(0.072)	(0.080)
Cut One	−2.156**	−2.556**	−1.650**
	(0.259)	(0.324)	(0.329)
Cut Two	−0.112	−0.613^	0.041
	(0.252)	(0.317)	(0.325)
N	1611	1197	1101
Log Likelihood	−1232.91	−943.87	−794.18
χ^2	290.02	265.20	222.98
Degrees of Freedom	28	28	28

Source: National Election Studies.
Note: Cell entries are ordered probit coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.
**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ^p < 0.10, two-tailed.

they do so most strongly in terms of their feelings toward the racial ingroup. Those who feel that whites as a group are particularly hard-working are more favorable toward Social Security spending. The substantive size of the association is large (the coefficient averages 0.567 across 1992, 1996, and 2000) and statistically significant. Stereotyping *blacks* as hard-working is somewhat associated with less support for Social Security, as we would expect. Also as we would expect, this relationship is somewhat weaker.

This provides additional confidence in the results presented so far. This measure is both more specific and more precisely tied to a central aspect of the framing of Social Security; respondents who feel that their racial group is particularly hard-working support more spending on Social Security—a program that is framed as a just reward for hard work.

Table 4 shows the relevant results from a model that includes racial resentment as well as the thermometer

TABLE 4 Racialization of Social Security Opinion, Model with Racial Resentment and Thermometer Ratings

	Social Security Opinion			
Variable	**1988**	**1992**	**1994**	**2000**
Thermometer Rating of Whites	0.465*	0.490*	0.451*	0.510^
	(0.207)	(0.201)	(0.230)	(0.268)
Thermometer Rating of Blacks	0.092	−0.203	0.187	−0.561*
	(0.209)	(0.203)	(0.203)	(0.265)
Racial Resentment	0.372^	0.675**	0.475*	0.721**
	(0.197)	(0.165)	(0.196)	(0.208)
Egalitarianism	0.404^	0.696**	0.414^	1.080**
	(0.231)	(0.195)	(0.232)	(0.252)
Limited Government	−0.898**	−1.022**	−1.339**	−1.321**
	(0.194)	(0.168)	(0.198)	(0.196)
Live in South	0.067	−0.054	0.046	−0.001
	(0.084)	(0.073)	(0.077)	(0.088)
Strong Democrat	0.084	0.163	−0.184	0.210
	(0.156)	(0.129)	(0.160)	(0.168)
Democrat	0.012	0.166	0.028	0.243
	(0.146)	(0.121)	(0.143)	(0.169)
Ind-Lean Democrat	−0.075	0.035	−0.033	0.166
	(0.162)	(0.122)	(0.155)	(0.164)
Ind-Lean Republican	−0.066	−0.127	−0.045	0.169
	(0.147)	(0.124)	(0.153)	(0.160)
Republican	−0.171	0.031	−0.010	0.116
	(0.149)	(0.121)	(0.145)	(0.163)
Strong Republican	−0.171	−0.005	−0.131	−0.003
	(0.153)	(0.131)	(0.149)	(0.167)
Retrospective Economic Evaluations	−0.217	−0.075	−0.376*	0.087
	(0.171)	(0.144)	(0.151)	(0.145)
Age	0.044	0.311	0.240	0.710^
	(0.329)	(0.299)	(0.340)	(0.388)
Age over 65	−0.416*	−0.478**	0.042	−0.442**
	(0.164)	(0.141)	(0.162)	(0.165)
Retired	0.119	0.009	−0.181	0.062
	(0.149)	(0.125)	(0.142)	(0.141)
Income <15pct	0.219^	0.200^	0.147	−0.259^
	(0.131)	(0.114)	(0.121)	(0.151)
Income 16–33pct	−0.007	0.151	0.053	−0.208
	(0.121)	(0.099)	(0.112)	(0.146)
Income 67–95pct	−0.013	−0.093	0.110	−0.153
	(0.088)	(0.078)	(0.089)	(0.101)
Income 96+pct	0.037	−0.398**	−0.239	−0.328^
	(0.204)	(0.142)	(0.174)	(0.190)
Income NA	−0.173	−0.024	0.051	−0.361**
	(0.151)	(0.136)	(0.154)	(0.136)
Grade School	0.210	0.224	0.041	0.768*
	(0.167)	(0.158)	(0.200)	(0.380)

(continued on next page)

TABLE 4 Racialization of Social Security Opinion, Model with Racial Resentment and Thermometer Ratings *(continued)*

	Social Security Opinion			
Variable	**1988**	**1992**	**1994**	**2000**
Some HS	−0.036	0.258*	0.153	−0.106
	(0.142)	(0.119)	(0.137)	(0.211)
Some College	−0.096	−0.083	−0.192*	−0.053
	(0.095)	(0.082)	(0.093)	(0.110)
BA+	−0.181^	−0.381**	−0.611**	−0.279*
	(0.102)	(0.087)	(0.100)	(0.115)
Ideology Liberal	*0.045*	*−0.160^*	*−0.076*	*0.002*
	(0.117)	(0.096)	(0.121)	(0.123)
Ideology Conservative	−0.209*	−0.093	−0.181^	0.082
	(0.098)	(0.085)	(0.094)	(0.112)
Ideology NA	0.116	0.067	0.065	0.216^
	(0.109)	(0.097)	(0.115)	(0.124)
Female	0.319**	0.270**	0.203**	0.358**
	(0.074)	(0.064)	(0.073)	(0.082)
Cut One	−1.818**	−1.325**	−1.977**	−1.085**
	(0.361)	(0.307)	(0.369)	(0.395)
Cut Two	0.174	0.756*	0.012	0.593
	(0.357)	(0.304)	(0.364)	(0.393)
N	1255	1628	1301	1049
Log Likelihood	−911.22	−1228.73	−967.03	−760.83
χ^2	181.68	310.97	304.47	213.14
Degrees of Freedom	29	29	29	29

Source: National Election Studies.
Note: Cell entries are ordered probit coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.
**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ^p < 0.10, two-tailed.

rating measures in 1988, 1992, 1994, and 2000. As expected, racial resentment is a powerful predictor of Social Security opinion among white Americans. Across the four years, the ordered probit coefficient averages 0.561, with somewhat larger estimated associations in 1992 and 2000. This implies that racially resentful whites are substantially more supportive of spending on Social Security when compared with the less racially resentful. This is strong support for the hypothesis of racialization, making use of an established, reliable, and valid measure of racial predispositions.

Moreover, even with the inclusion of racial resentment, the association of opinion with thermometer ratings of whites is robust. The estimated coefficient on the white thermometer rating is somewhat smaller (averaging 0.479 across these years, compared with 0.584 in the model without racial resentment). The estimated effect of the black thermometer rating is even noisier in this specification than in the basic model; the coefficient has the "wrong" sign in two of the four years. These effects are not surprising; while all three measures tap aspects of the racial schema, racial resentment is presumably the most reliable measure. These results confirm that, even above and beyond the effect of racial resentment, feelings about the white ingroup are strongly related to opinion on Social Security among whites.[18]

Social Security Contrasted with Other Social Welfare Programs

Finally, it is instructive to compare Social Security with other programs that I do not expect to be racialized, to confirm the results so far do not reflect either a *general* racialization of social policy, or some fluke of question

[18]The estimated effects for racial resentment are almost identical in a model that omits the thermometer ratings. This basic pattern of results also holds when the racial resentment scale is replaced with one made up only of the first and third items. These two items contrast whites and blacks explicitly and are therefore arguably most relevant for my argument (see footnote 12).

TABLE 5 Effect of Racial Predispositions on Various Social Welfare Spending Preferences among Whites

Variable	1984	1988	1992	1994	1996	2000
			Schools Spending			
Thermometer Rating of Whites	0.216	0.420*	−0.039	0.278	0.481^	−0.066
Thermometer Rating of Blacks	0.263	−0.473*	0.075	0.194	−0.083	−0.1253
			Child Care Spending			
Thermometer Rating of Whites	—	0.230	0.198	0.715**	0.789**	0.144
Thermometer Rating of Blacks	—	−0.162	0.004	−0.047	−0.089	−0.134
			Spending on the Poor			
Thermometer Rating of Whites	—	—	0.280	—	0.164	0.184
Thermometer Rating of Blacks	—	—	0.606**	—	0.377	0.113
			Spending on Unemployed			
Thermometer Rating of Whites	0.246	0.100	0.190	—	—	—
Thermometer Rating of Blacks	0.213	0.243	0.454*	—	—	—
			Homeless Spending			
Thermometer Rating of Whites	—	0.144	0.411^	—	0.530*	—
Thermometer Rating of Blacks	—	0.589**	0.224	—	0.203	—
			Financial Aid Spending			
Thermometer Rating of Whites	—	0.133	0.452*	—	0.356	—
Thermometer Rating of Blacks	—	0.276	0.180	—	−0.258	—

Source: National Election Studies.
Note: Cell entries are ordered probit coefficients from models of spending preferences on racial predispositions. Models include control variables as discussed in text; complete results are available from the author's web page.
**$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$; ^$p < 0.10$, two-tailed.

wording in the spending battery. To this end, Table 5 presents the results for a series of social welfare spending items that have not been traditionally framed in racialized ways, and which, therefore, I do not expect to be racialized. I ran models for six policies, which appeared in at least three of the six NES studies: spending on schools, child care, the poor, the unemployed, the homeless, and college financial aid. I ran the same ordered probit model for each policy as discussed above, separately for each study year. The table displays the coefficients on the two racial thermometer rating measures from each model.[19]

Opinion on these policies is not consistently racialized. Certain of the policies were somewhat racialized in a particular year, but none steadily through time. These results are consistent with the claim that *all* social welfare policy discourse invokes race implicitly to some extent (e.g., Edsall and Edsall 1992). Perhaps certain policies in certain years were framed in ways that—relatively idiosyncratically and temporarily—lit up racial considerations for those policies.[20] However, there is no general pattern of racialization, either by policy or by year. This indicates that the extremely consistent results for Social Security reflect racialization of that policy, per se, rather than generalized racialization of the social welfare realm generally, or question wording or ordering effects.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that subtle characteristics of issue frames can associate opinion on policies with citizens' racial predispositions, even without explicit mention of race or of racial code words. I reviewed the frames deployed in discussion of Social Security in recent American history to show the ways they should resonate with

[19]Complete results for these models are available from the author's web page.

[20]One explanation that does *not* seem to account for the pattern of racialized results is question order effects. Specific policies might appear racialized insofar as they follow questions in the survey that invoke race, either by association with those policies, or by contrast with them. However, examination of the survey instruments from 1984 to 2000 suggests no consistent pattern of the presence or absence of racialization after explicitly racial items.

racial schemas and then demonstrated that public opinion does indeed reflect just this sort of racialization. Whites' feelings about their own racial group drive the racialization, as I expect from the ways the frames fit the racial schema. The substantive impact of racial predispositions on Social Security spending opinion is about the same as their impact on welfare spending opinion, although in the opposite direction. Moreover, these findings are robust to various measures of racial predispositions and are consistent over time. Overall, this article shows that the association of policies with race—both in political discourse and in public opinion—can be quite subtle and therefore can and does occur for policies we might not have expected.

The political effects of Social Security racialization should differ from that of welfare. The association of welfare and other so-called "big government" programs with blacks is one of the bases for Republican appeals to "Reagan Democrats"—the blue-collar, socially and racially conservative voters who formed a central part of the New Deal Democratic coalition. Social Security has traditionally been associated with the Democratic Party (Petrocik 1996), which means that the mirror-image racialization of Social Security should increase somewhat the appeal of the Democratic Party among some of these same voters. Symbolically, support for and protection of Social Security may serve to ally the Democratic Party with the white ingroup for some racially conservative whites, and in so doing, counteract to some of the draw of the Republican Party. In this light, the Democratic strategy of positioning themselves as protectors of Social Security seems wise, at least as a strategy for limiting the loss of "Reagan Democrats."

All of this also likely reinforces white Americans' inclination to understand contemporary politics in racial terms, both explicitly and at a more subtle, symbolic level. This is troubling, of course. Political leaders almost certainly do not intend to draw on racial considerations when they discuss Social Security. Nevertheless, in doing so they engage white Americans' race schemas; this increases the accessibility of those schemas for other race coding, and reinforces the implicit connections between race and politics more generally. This case is particularly insidious, precisely because the racialization is so subtle. While the power of some racial appeals can be mitigated by unmasking them as such (see Mendelberg 2001), it seems likely that many people would not recognize the racial resonance of the Social Security frames, even if it were pointed out to them. This highlights the fact that ostensibly race-neutral policy and political language can nevertheless draw on and reinforce the legacy of race in America; it also reinforces the point that a race-neutral politics is not achievable, even if desirable, as long as race plays such a major role socially and psychologically.

More broadly, these results build on recent theoretical developments in the study of race. As scholars of whiteness are pushing our understanding of race beyond the idea that "race" is synonymous with "nonwhite," this article shows how public policies can become subtly associated in people's minds with the white racial ingroup. New Deal social welfare legislation created two tracks of programs—needs-based programs such as Aid for Dependent Children, and "universal" programs including Social Security. This analysis demonstrates that at least some of the so-called universal programs in fact have become associated with whiteness, serving, perhaps, as a psychological aspect of white privilege. These results thus reinforce the contention that exploring whiteness is important for understanding politics, despite its relatively invisibility.

Finally, these results suggest several avenues for further research. First, careful experimental and historical research is necessary to explore the degree to which the racialization of specific policies—including Social Security—engenders a racialized understanding of politics more broadly. Second, these results reaffirm that framing matters: that the symbolic associations forged by rhetorical issue frames can affect the grounds on which citizens evaluate policies. More work is necessary, however, on the political psychology of this process, in order to understand not just when frames will succeed but also when they will fail, and to explore the conditions under which policies might be "de-racialized," and the impact this might have on politics more broadly.

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