RACIAL PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION
An IDEA Lesson

MODULE 5

What causes some people to be more prejudiced than other people? A number of theories have been proposed by social scientists to answer that question. Module 5 examines four such theories in the context of racial prejudice. Each of the four theories is discussed separately below. In examining these theories, I will use responses to the GSS question RACPUSH which has the following wording:

RACPUSH -- BLACKS SHOULDN'T PUSH
Here are some opinions other people have expressed in connection with (Negro/Black)-white relations. Which statement on the card comes closest to how you, yourself, feel? (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) shouldn't push themselves where they're not wanted.

VALUE LABEL
1  AGREE STRONGLY
2  AGREE SLIGHTLY
3  DISAGREE SLIGHTLY
4  DISAGREE STRONGLY

When entering the RACPUSH variable into the SDA interface, I recode the response options from four categories to two. The “Agree Strongly” and “Agree Slightly” responses are combined into a single “Agree” category. Similarly, the “Disagree Slightly” and “Disagree Strongly” responses are combined into a single “Disagree” category. To make this make change, I enter RACPUSH in the SDA interface as RACPUSH (R: 1-2 “Agree”; 3-4 “Disagree”).

A. Theory I: The Authoritarian Personality
Shortly after the second World War, psychologist Theodor Adorno and his colleagues introduced the idea of an “authoritarian personality.” As Eliot Aronson (“The Social Animal,” 1984, Freeman, page 252) explained:

“Basically, authoritarian personalities have the following characteristics: They tend to be rigid in their beliefs; they tend to possess ‘conventional’ values; they are intolerant of weakness (in themselves as well as in others); they tend to be highly punitive; they are suspicious; and they are respectful of authority to an unusual degree. The instrument developed to determine authoritarianism (called the F scale) measures the extent to which each person agrees or disagrees with such items as these:

1. Sex crimes such as rape and attacks on children deserve more than mere punishment; such criminals ought to be publicly whipped, or worse.
2. Most people don’t realize how much our lives are controlled by plots hatched in secret places.
3. Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.

A high degree of agreement with such items indicates authoritarianism.”

It has been theorized that persons with an authoritarian personality (that is, individuals who are high on authoritarianism) are likely to be prejudiced against racial and ethnic minority groups.
A number of questions in the GSS data set tap into issues that are similar to questions on the F scale or are highly related to those questions. Two such GSS questions are named IFWRONG and OBEY. The wordings of these questions are the following:

**IFWRONG -- AGREE PEOPLE SHOULD SUPPORT THEIR COUNTRY**

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? People should support their country even if the country is in the wrong.

- **VALUE LABEL**
  - 1 STRONGLY AGREE
  - 2 AGREE
  - 3 NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
  - 4 DISAGREE
  - 5 STRONGLY DISAGREE

**OBEY -- TO OBEY**

If you had to choose, which thing on this list would you pick as the most important for a child to learn to prepare him or her for life? Which comes next in importance? b. Which comes third? c. Which comes fourth?

- **To obey**
  - **VALUE LABEL**
    - 1 MOST IMPORTANT
    - 2 2ND IMPORTANT
    - 3 3RD IMPORTANT
    - 4 4TH IMPORTANT
    - 5 LEAST IMPORTANT

If individuals who are authoritarian are more likely to be prejudiced than individuals who are not high on authoritarianism, these two GSS items (IFWRONG and OBEY) should be related to RACPUSH. Let’s create cross-tabulations to find out. Here are the entries you need to make in the SDA interface:

- **Row:** RACPUSH (R: 1-2 “Agree” ; 3-4 “Disagree”)
- **Column:** IFWRONG OBEY
- **Percentaging decimals:** 0
- [V] Statistics
- [Run the Table]

The two cross-tabulations that are produced are given in Screens 5.1 and 5.2.
The cross-tabulation in Screens 5.1 shows that responses to RACPUSH are highly related to responses to IFWRONG. Of those who strongly agree that people should support their country even if it is wrong, 60 percent agree that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted. In contrast, of those who strongly disagree that people should support their country even if it is wrong, only 32 percent agree that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted. The value of delta in the cross-tabulation in Screen 5.1 is 28 percentage points which suggests a strong relationship exists between RACPUSH and IFWRONG.

Much the same conclusion holds for the cross-tabulation in Screen 5.2, which shows that responses to RACPUSH are highly related to responses to OBEY. Of those who believe that “to obey” is the most important thing for a child to learn, 58% believe that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted. In contrast, of those who believe that “to obey” is the least important thing for a child to learn, only 30% believe that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted. The delta in the cross-tabulation in Screen 5.2 is again 28 percentage points, which indicates the existence of a strong relationship between RACPUSH and OBEY.

It is perhaps worth noting that the relationships in both of the preceding cross-tabulations are statistically significant. Taken together, the results in Screens 5.1 and 5.2 lend substantial support to the theory that people who are authoritarian are more likely to be prejudiced than people who are not authoritarian.

**B. Theory II: Feelings of Inferiority**

Let’s consider a second theory that might explain why some people are more prejudiced than others. Perhaps individuals who feel poorly about themselves and who generally feel inferior to others have a need to find someone towards whom to feel superior, such as minority groups. If the need to feel superior results in a denigration of minority groups this could account for racial prejudice. The WRTHLESS variable on the GSS asks the following question:

WRTHLESS -- IN PAST 30 DAYS FEEL WORTHLESS
In the past 30 days, about how often did you feel: Worthless.

VALUE LABEL
1   ALL OF THE TIME
2   MOST OF THE TIME
3   SOME OF THE TIME
4   LITTLE OF TIME
5   NONE OF THE TIME
If feelings of worthlessness are indeed a cause of racial prejudice, we should expect the WRTHLESS question to be related to RACPUSH. Let’s create a cross-tabulation to find out. Here are the entries you need to make in the SDA interface:

**Row:** \[ \text{RACPUSH (R: 1-2 “Agree” ; 3-4 “Disagree”)} \]
**Column:** \[ \text{WRTHLESS} \]
**Percentaging decimals:** 0

Statistics
[Run the Table]

The cross-tabulation that SDA produces is given in Screen 5.3.

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1: All of the Time</th>
<th>2: Most of the Time</th>
<th>3: Some of the Time</th>
<th>4: Little of the Time</th>
<th>5: None of the Time</th>
<th>Row Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Agree</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Disagree</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COL TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>897</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

As the cross-tabulation in Screen 5.3 shows, of those who feel worthless all the time, 50% agree that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted. In contrast, of those who feel worthless none of the time, only 42% agree that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted. The difference between 50% and 42% gives a delta value of 8%, which suggests that there is a (weak) relationship between WRTHLESS and RACPUSH, but we should be quick to note that the results are not statistically significant. The p-value from the chi-square test of statistical significance is .83. As a result, we must withhold judgment about whether or not a relationship exists in the U.S. population. But even if WTHLESS and RACPUSH are related in the population, the data do not suggest that the relationship is very strong. The theory that feelings of inferiority or worthlessness lead to racial prejudice does not receive compelling support from our analysis.

**C. Theory III: Economic and Political Competition**

A third theory of racial prejudice is based on economic and political competition under conditions of limited resources. According to this theory, those who are most likely to lose resources (either economically or politically) to minority groups are those who are most likely to be prejudiced against the minority groups. In essence, competition is hypothesized to breed contempt. The RDISCAFF variable on the GSS survey asks the following question:

**RDISCAFF -- CHANCES FAMILY MEMBER NOT PROMOTED FOR OTHER RACE IN TERMS OF THE OPPOSITE RACE:** What do you think the chances are these days that you or anyone in your family won’t get a job or promotion while an equally or less qualified [White/(Black/African-American)] employee receives one instead? Would you say the chances of this happening are very likely, somewhat likely, somewhat unlikely, or very unlikely?
VALUE LABEL
1 VERY LIKELY
2 SOMEWHAT LIKELY
3 SOMEWHAT UNLIKELY
4 VERY UNLIKELY

If economic competition is a cause of racial prejudice, we should expect the RDISCAFF question to be related to RACPUSH. Let’s create a cross-tabulation to find out. Here are the entries you need to make in the SDA interface:

Row: RACPUSH (R: 1-2 “Agree” ; 3-4 “Disagree”)
Column: RDISCAFF
Selection filter: RACE(1)
Percentaging decimals: 0

Note I’ve included a selection filter (i.e., RACE(1)) so as to restrict the analysis to only those respondents who are white. Selecting for whites only would have made no fundamental difference in the previous analyses in Module 5, but does modify the results in the present analysis (and provides a fairer test of the theory). The cross-tabulation that SDA produces is given in Screen 5.4.

As the cross-tabulation in Screen 5.4 shows, of white individuals who believe they are very likely to lose a job or promotion to a black individual, 57% agree that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted. In contrast, of white individuals who believe they are very unlikely to lose a job or promotion to a black individual, only 38% agree that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted. The difference between 57% and 38% gives a delta value of 19 percentage points, which suggests a fairly strong relationship between RDISCAFF and RACPUSH. Also note that the relationship is statistically significant. The theory that economic competition causes racial prejudice is supported. But based on the values of delta, the relationship between economic competition and racial prejudice does not appear to be as strong as the relationship between authoritarian personalities and racial prejudice.

D. Theory IV: Displaced Aggression -- The Scapegoat Theory of Prejudice
The final theory we will consider has to do with aggression. It is well known that frustration can cause aggression. If you cannot express aggression toward the source of your
frustration, you might express it toward a scapegoat such as someone who is more vulnerable or less powerful, including members of minority groups. Hence people who are generally unhappy and frustrated in life might be expected to express more racial prejudice. We can test this prediction using a number of different questions in the GSS data set. For example, one of the GSS questions is labeled SATJOB and has the following wording:

SATJOB -- JOB OR HOUSEWORK
IF CURRENTLY WORKING, TEMPORARILY NOT AT WORK, OR KEEPING HOUSE, ASK. On the whole, how satisfied are you with the work you do--would you say you are very satisfied, moderately satisfied, a little dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied?

VALUE LABEL
1        VERY SATISFIED
2        MOD. SATISFIED
3        A LITTLE DISSAT
4        VERY DISSATISFIED

If frustration is a cause of racial prejudice, we should expect the SATJOB question (which represents level of frustration) to be related to RACPUSH. Let’s create a cross-tabulation to find out. Here are the entries you need to make in the SDA interface:

Row: RACPUSH (R: 1-2 “Agree”; 3-4 “Disagree”)
Column: SATJOB
Selection filter: RACE(1)
Percentaging decimals: 0

[Run the Table]

Note that I’ve again used a selection filter (i.e., RACE(1)), I’ve restricted the analysis to only those who are white. (If the selection filter is omitted, the results provide no more support for the theory that is being tested, than if the filter is included.) The cross-tabulation that SDA produces is given in Screen 5.5.

As the cross-tabulation in Screen 5.5 shows, the same percentage (58%) of white individuals believe that blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted regardless of whether the white individuals are very satisfied or very dissatisfied with their jobs. All told, the results in Screen 5.5 provide very little support for the theory that frustration (at least with one’s job) stimulates racial prejudice.
E. Summary

Module 5 tests four theories of the causes of racial prejudice. I should note that the tests of these theories were pretty simple and it is certainly true that both more elaborate and more complete tests of each of the theories could be performed (either using the GSS data or in other ways). So the conclusions that we have drawn here should not be taken as definitive. Nonetheless it is fair to say that the results in Module 5 provide fairly strong support for two theories and very little, if any support, for the other two theories. In particular, the results show that individuals who exhibit at least certain aspect of an authoritarian personality are more likely to be racially prejudiced (at least with regard to one GSS question) than individuals who do not exhibit the given aspects of an authoritarian personality. The results in Module 5 also provide support for the theory that individuals who are in economic competition with minorities are more likely to be racially prejudiced than those who are not in economic competition. In contrast, the results in Module 5 provided little or no support for the theories that racial prejudice is caused either by feeling of inferiority or by frustration. Further tests of these theories are conducted in the Assignment that follows.
ASSIGNMENT
Racial Prejudice and Discrimination
MODULE 5

Module 5 examines four theories of prejudice. In each of the tests of the four theories, the GSS question RACPUSH was used as the measure of racial prejudice. To increase the generality of the findings, in the present Assignment, we use the GSS question of RACMAR, in place of RACPUSH, as the measure of racial prejudice. The wording of the RACMAR question is the following:

RACMAR -- FAVOR LAW AGAINST RACIAL INTERMARRIAGE
Do you think there should be laws against marriages between (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) and whites?
VALUE LABEL
1 YES
2 NO

1. Theory I: One theory of racial prejudice is that prejudice is exacerbated in individuals who have an authoritarian personality. The TWOCLASS and PUNSIN questions in the GSS tap into features of the authoritarian personality. The wordings of these two questions are the following:

TWOCLASS -- WEAK VS. STRONG
Now I am going to read you several statements. For each one please tell me whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly. The first statement is: People can be divided into two classes--the weak and the strong
VALUE LABEL
1 STRONGLY AGREE
2 AGREE
3 DISAGREE
4 STRONGLY DISAGREE

PUNSIN -- R AGREES THAT SINNERS MUST BE PUNISHED
Please consider the following statements and tell me whether you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with each statement. Those who violate God's rules must be punished.
VALUE LABEL
1 AGREE STRONGLY
2 AGREE SOMEWHAT
3 DISAGREE SOMEWHAT
4 DISAGREE STRONGLY

Use the GSS data to create a cross-tabulation of RACMAR with each of the two preceding authoritarian personality items (i.e., TWOCLASS and PUNSIN). Enter RACMAR as the “Row” variable and TWOCLASS and PUNSIN as the “Column” variables. Add the selection filter of RACE(1) so as to restrict the analyses to white individuals.
A. Fill in results from the first row of each cross-tabulation below. In each blank space, write the percent of respondents who responded “yes” to the RACMAR question. Also report the p-value for the chi-square significance test and the value of delta in the spaces on the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Categories on TWOCLASS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Responding “Yes” on RACMAR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Categories on PUNSIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Responding “Yes” on RACMAR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Do the results of these two cross-tabulations support the theory that authoritarian personalities are a contributing cause of racial prejudice. Yes  No  Mixed

C. Explain your answer in part B.
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

D. How do the results in Part B compare to the results reported in the body of Module 5 concerning the effects of an authoritarian personality on racial prejudice?
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Copyright © 2007 by Charles S. Reichardt
2. Theory II: Another theory of racial prejudice is that it is a result, at least in part, of some people feeling inferior or unsuccessful and needing someone toward whom to feel superior. The GSS question of WRTHLESS was examined in Module 5. Perhaps another relevant GSS question is FAMLIFE. The wording of WRTHLESS and FAMLIFE are given below.

WRTHLESS -- IN PAST 30 DAYS FEEL WORTHLESS
In the past 30 days, about how often did you feel: Worthless.
VALUE LABEL
1   ALL OF THE TIME
2   MOST OF THE TIME
3    SOME OF THE TIME
4    LITTLE OF TIME
5    NONE OF THE TIME

FAMLIFE -- HOW SUCCESSFUL IN FAMILY LIFE
The next few questions are about your success in different areas of life. First, how successful do you feel in your family life? Do you feel...
VALUE LABEL
1    NOT AT ALL SUCCESSFUL
2    NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL
3    SOMEWHAT SUCCESSFUL
4    VERY SUCCESSFUL
5    COMPLETELY SUCCESSFUL

Use the GSS data to create a cross-tabulation of RACMAR with each of the two preceding “feelings-of-lack-of-success-or-inferiority” questions (i.e., WRTHLESS and FAMLIFE). Enter RACMAR as the “Row” variable and WRTHLESS and FAMLIFE as the “Column” variables. Add the selection filter of RACE(1) so as to restrict the analyses to white individuals.

A. Fill in results from the first row of each cross-tabulation below. In each blank space, write the percent of respondents who responded “yes” to the RACMAR question. Also report the p-value for the chi-square significance test and the value of delta in the spaces on the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Categories on WRTHLESS</th>
<th>Percent Responding “Yes” on RACMAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All of the Time</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the Time</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the Time</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little of the Time</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the Time</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Categories on FAMLIFE</th>
<th>Percent Responding “Yes” on RACMAR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very successful</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat successful</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very successful</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely successful</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright © 2007 by Charles S. Reichardt
B. Do the results of these two cross-tabulations support the theory that feelings of inferiority or lack of success are a contributing cause of racial prejudice.

Yes   No   Mixed

C. Explain your answer in part B.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

D. How do the results in Part B compare to the results reported in the body of Module 5 concerning the effects of feelings of inferiority or lack of success on racial prejudice?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

3. Theory III: Another theory of racial prejudice is based on economic and political competition, with the expectation that those who are most vulnerable to competition from racial minorities would exhibit the most racial prejudice. The GSS question of WORRYJOB is relevant to feelings of economic vulnerability. The wording of the WORRYJOB question is:

WORRYJOB -- DO YOU WORRY ABOUT LOSING JOB
To what extent, if at all, do you worry about the possibility of losing your job?
PLEASE CIRCLE ONE NUMBER ONLY

VALUE   LABEL
1       WORRY GREAT DEAL
2       WORRY SOME XTENT
3       WORRY A LITTLE
4       DONT WORRY
Use the GSS data to create a cross-tabulation of RACMAR and WORRYJOB. Enter RACMAR as the “Row” variable and WORRYJOB as the “Column” variables. Add the selection filter of RACE(1) so as to restrict the analyses to white individuals.

A. Fill in results from the first row of the cross-tabulation below. In each blank space, write the percent of respondents who responded “yes” to the RACMAR question. Also report the p-value for the chi-square significance test and the value of delta in the spaces on the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Categories on WORRYJOB</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
<th>Worry</th>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>Worry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Responding “Yes” on RACMAR</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Do the results of these two cross-tabulations support the theory that economic competition is a contributing cause of racial prejudice. Yes No

C. Explain your answer in part B.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

D. How do the results in Part B compare to the results reported in the body of Module 5 concerning the effects of economic competition on racial prejudice?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

4. Theory IV: The fourth theory of racial prejudice is that minorities are treated as a scapegoat by those who feel frustrated or unsatisfied with life. The GSS question of HAPPY is
relevant to feelings of satisfaction with life in general. The wording of the HAPPY question is:

HAPPY -- GENERAL HAPPINESS
Taken all together, how would you say things are these days--would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?

VALUE LABEL
1 VERY HAPPY
2 PRETTY HAPPY
3 NOT TOO HAPPY

Use the GSS data to create a cross-tabulation of RACMAR and HAPPY. Enter RACMAR as the “Row” variable and HAPPY as the “Column” variables. Add the selection filter of RACE(1) so as to restrict the analyses to white individuals.

A. Fill in results from the first row of the cross-tabulation below. In each blank space, write the percent of respondents who responded “yes” to the RACMAR question. Also report the p-value for the chi-square significance test and the value of delta in the spaces on the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Categories on HAPPY</th>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Pretty Happy</th>
<th>Not too Happy</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>delta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Responding “Yes” on RACMAR</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Do the results of these two cross-tabulations support the theory that frustration is a contributing cause of racial prejudice. Yes No

C. Explain your answer in part B.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

D. How do the results in Part B compare to the results reported in the body of Module 5 concerning the scapegoat theory of racial prejudice?

________________________________________________________________

Copyright © 2007 by Charles S. Reichardt