

# Public Opinion, Prejudice and the Racialization of Welfare in Canada

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*Abstract:* Drawing on a unique survey experiment in the 2011 Canadian Election Study dataset, this paper examines the ways in which racial cues influence attitudes toward redistributive policy. While work in the US points to a strong racialization of welfare attitudes, little research explores the ways in which racial cues may structure attitudes about welfare elsewhere. In the Canadian context, Aboriginal peoples have faced both historic persecution and continue to face severe discrimination. They also experience much higher levels of poverty than other groups in Canada. Our results examine the effect that being Aboriginal has on the public's support for social assistance. Our results suggest that support for redistribution is lower when recipients are portrayed as Aboriginal than when they are portrayed as white. As we have seen in the US, then, support for welfare is related to racialized perceptions about those who benefit from social assistance.

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Welfare is a policy domain that evokes strong debates in industrialized democracies. Policies that are targeted at the poorest members of society are meant to provide a social safety net to those in need, yet public support for such programs varies substantially. And ideas about who receives such benefits, and about whether they have “earned” them, play an important role in explaining public attitudes toward welfare.

This fact is perhaps most evident in the United States, where means-tested social assistance programs, commonly referred to as welfare, are seen largely as programs that assist poor Blacks (especially poor Black women). This racialization of welfare in the US is seen as one of the primary explanations for the low levels of support that it receives (Bobo and Kleugal 1993; Gilens 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 2000; Winter 2006, 2008; although see Sniderman et al. 1996). In other industrialized countries, there is less evidence to suggest that racialized attitudes have a direct bearing on support for social assistance, though there is increasing evidence that rising social diversity is eroding support for the welfare state (Luttmer 2001; Crepaz 2008; Soroka et al. 2006; Kesler and Bloemraad 2010); and there is evidence that views about recipients’ deservingness matter as well (e.g., van Oorschot 2011).

In the Canadian context, there is very little research considering the impact that characteristics (ethnic and otherwise) of social welfare beneficiaries have on public support for such programs. Yet we know that certain groups, like First Nations communities, are particularly likely to face both economic challenges and prejudice. Colonialism is often argued to be at the root of these problems, having had (and continuing to have) a profound effect on Aboriginal people’s economic dependence (Buckley 1992, Alfred 2009). And like Blacks in the US, Aboriginal peoples’ use of social welfare services is often portrayed as taking advantage of the system and a reflection of their lack of values (see, for example, Helin 2006; Flanagan 2000; Widdowson & Howard 2008). At the centre of our argument, then, is that the real challenges of poverty faced by Aboriginal peoples, combined with the pervasive and dominant stereotypes about Aboriginal people’s values, capacities and desire to get out of poverty, are intimately tied to (non-Aboriginal) Canadians’ support for welfare programs.

In this paper we draw on a unique experimental vignette embedded with the 2011 Canadian Election Study (CES) online panel to examine whether portraying social assistance recipients as Aboriginal negatively influences support for cash benefits. In addition, we explore the direct and indirect effects of outgroup attitudes on support. The conclusions suggest that, at least among those who are negatively predisposed towards Aboriginals, support for social assistance decreases dramatically when recipients are Aboriginal. By placing these findings within the

larger Canadian context, they suggest that Aboriginal peoples not only face very real challenges associated with poverty, but also that their association with poverty may further erode the public support for policies addressing these issues.

## **Welfare Attitudes and the Racialization of Poverty**

While economic hardship is, in theory, a potential risk for everyone, some people are clearly more likely than others to face it. Poverty is often concentrated among urban centers, among women, and among racial minorities. Focusing on the urban poor, Wilson (1987) has developed the concept of an “underclass” to refer to the social isolation that can result from joblessness when combined with an impoverished neighborhood. Social isolation from mainstream social networks minimize economic opportunities, while at the same time promoting an oppositional culture which further limits opportunities. Massey and Denton (1993, 166), for instance, write about a culture of poverty in which segregation leads to a ghetto culture fostering male joblessness, teenage and single motherhood, as well as substance abuse.

While both Wilson (1987) and Massey and Denton (1993) clearly link cultural arguments to structure, the idea of a culture of poverty has been particularly powerful in public discussions of welfare. At its core, the argument is that the poor have attitudes and values that help perpetuate their economic difficulties.<sup>1</sup> Persistent poverty, from this perspective, is seen in large part as the fault of the poor, who fail to do what it takes to get themselves out of poverty. This idea that (at least some) poor people are responsible for their plight has a direct impact on the ways in which welfare recipients are viewed and evaluated.

Discourses around self-sufficiency and dependence play a fundamental role in the debate surrounding welfare, particularly in the US (Hecl 1986; Iyengar 1990; Fraser and Gordon 1994; Misra et al. 2003; Somers and Brock 2005). The dominant, and according to Fraser and Gordon (1994: 325) even “pathological,” view is that welfare creates a dependency on the state. Those who rely on welfare to support themselves are viewed as responsible for their situation, due to lack of a work ethic or moral character (Golding and Middleton 1982; Smith and Stone 1989; Henry et al 2004; Somers and Brock 2005). Furthermore, their use of social assistance programs is argued to breed such personal characteristics. By giving people something for nothing, so it goes, they have no motivation to work and become a drain on the whole system.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that little evidence of this culture of dependence is actual found among welfare recipients (Schneider and Jacoby 2005a).

While US programs like social security promoted integration among White middle class (male) workers through a national, universal program structure, programs for the poor, like the AFDC and food stamps, were targeted at an increasingly feminized and disproportionately Black underclass (Lieberman 1998; Williams 2004). The association between race, gender, and poverty, then, confronts these larger discourses about a culture of poverty. The result is that welfare becomes “race-coded” (Gilens 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1999; Mendelberg 2001; Schram et al. 2003; Winter 2006, 2008).

The dominant discourse around poverty portrayed in the media reinforces the racialized stigma around welfare recipients in the US. Gilens (1996a; 1999) shows that when it comes to media portrayals of the poor, Black recipients are substantially overrepresented compared to their actual program usage. Blacks tend to be portrayed not only disproportionately in stories about welfare, but they often appear in the least sympathetic stories: stories about unemployed adults (Gilens 1996a) and in stories about unpopular welfare topics like dependency (Clawson and Trice 2000; Misra et al 2003). The race frame is perpetuated in educational textbooks that similarly overrepresent Blacks when addressing poverty (Clawson and Kegler 2000, Clawson 2002). And Mendelberg (2001) documents how such frames are manipulated by political elites to appeal to White voters. Indeed, Mendelberg’s conclusions are that racial frames are most successful when they are implicit, which speaks to their pervasiveness in contemporary discussions of issues like welfare.

It should not be surprising then that Americans believe that more Blacks are on welfare than actually are (Gilens 1999: 68) and that attitudes toward Blacks can partly explain lower levels of support (Gilens 1995; 1996b; 1999; Nelson 1999; Frederico 2005; Winter 2008). The link between race and welfare is well described by Winter, who argues:

This process is controlled by the interaction between the structure of citizens’ cognitive representations of race and gender – their race and gender schemas – and the structure that political elites lend to issues through framing. Frames impose structure on political issues, and when that structure matches the cognitive representation, or schema, for a social category (such as race and gender), that schema will likely govern comprehension and evaluation of the issues (2008: 141).

In other words, people are likely to hold specific beliefs about groups that rely on negative and prejudicial stereotypes. These views are based on the pervasive tendency of people to view outgroups in unequal and negative ways. (ibid, 37-41). When dominant frames about a policy area overlap with these negative attitudes, policy attitudes are likely to be heavily influenced.

The negative and unequal dimensions of the Black-White schema in the US relies heavily on a history of racial discrimination and prejudice that views Blacks as lazy and unambitious and as somehow responsible for their social, political and economic inequality (Kinder and Sears 1981; Kleugal 1990; Gilens 1995; Sidanius et al 1996; Nelson 1999).<sup>2</sup> When it comes to welfare, then, the view of Blacks as responsible for their poverty and lacking the moral qualities to get themselves out combines with the overwhelming view of welfare as a Black phenomenon. The result, Winter suggests, is that racial schema coalesce with a dominant frame of welfare as dependency to create low levels of support for redistribution.

The empirical evidence that racial attitudes matter for welfare opinions in the US is substantial, although the specific mechanisms linking racial attitudes to welfare remain contested. One of the major sources of contention is whether attitudes toward welfare are politically correct ways to express racial discrimination (as in the symbolic politics approach) or if opposition to welfare is more directly linked to attitudes about equality and individualism (Sniderman et al. 1993, 1996). Yet, increasing agreement seems to be emerging that racial cues can result in lower levels of support for social assistance because when negative racial stereotypes are primed, even those who do not hold prejudicial values may respond negatively (Devine 1989; see also Frederico 2004, 2005). One of the findings that makes recent work in this area so compelling is that in the American context, prejudicial stereotypes about Blacks seem to accentuate issues around deservingness, which play a key role in determining support for social assistance (Appelbaum 2001; Goren 2003; Peterson 2012).

## **Welfare and Poverty in Canada**

Poverty in Canada shares many of the same structural characteristics as the US. Poverty persistence is higher in North America (both in Canada and the US) than in Europe (Germany and UK) (Vallenta 2006). As in the US, the long-term poor in Canada are more likely to be women and single parents (Blank and Hanratty 1993; Finnie and Sweetman 2003). Lone parents not only have the highest probability of entering poverty, but (female) lone parents are also especially unlikely to exit poverty (Finnie and Sweetman 2003, 301-302.)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This is evident in recent work suggesting that Black welfare recipients are disproportionately punished for “deviant” behavior — Schram and colleagues (2009) find that in fictional vignettes of welfare recipients, Blacks are punished more severely by case managers for prior sanctions than Whites.

<sup>3</sup> Note that an earlier study suggests that while single mothers are disproportionately represented among the poor in Canada, they make up a smaller percentage. Blank and Hanratty (1993, 200-201) report that only 47% of Canada’s poor are single mothers, compared to 62% in the US’s poor.

Urban and racialized poverty is also present in Canada in ways that mirror the phenomenon in the US. Hajnal (1995) has shown that concentrated urban poverty (defined as 40% of residents with income below the poverty lines) exists, and that it is particularly concentrated among Aboriginal groups and Blacks in older industrial cities. He further shows that it is related to welfare dependency, educational deficiencies and labor force non-participation. While the data are from the 1980s, they showed that concentrated poverty neighborhoods were highest for Aboriginals (18.6% living in neighborhoods with 40% or more living below poverty line) followed by Blacks (10.7%) and Chinese (9.2%) in the 25 CMAs in Canada (Hajnal 1995, 514). Aboriginals are also most likely, at 39.2%, to live in poor neighborhoods (20-40% poor in neighborhood, followed by Chinese (37.9%) and Blacks (34.3%) (ibid). More recent findings are similar: Kazemipur and Halli (1997) find that Aboriginals are most likely to live in concentrated poverty, followed by visible minority communities, despite the fact that they are not the population with the highest poverty rates (Latin Americans, West Asians and Arabs had similar poverty rates as Aboriginals, around 40%) in 1991. The structure of poverty in Canada thus shares many similarities with the US.

Canada and the US also share similar program structures. Both Canada and the US have liberal welfare state regimes. Like the US as well, Canada has also experienced a retrenchment of the welfare state and a shift in rhetoric around poverty increasingly linking it to individual deficiencies rather than structural barriers (Anton and Côté 1998; Bashevkin 2002). The structure of cash transfer programs in North America tend to be less effective than in Europe at reducing poverty persistence (Vallenta 2006). Thus, while Canadian programs tend to be more generous than US programs (Blank and Hanratty 1993, 192), the structure of programs in both countries include means-tested programs aimed at those unable to meet basic needs such as food and shelter.<sup>4</sup> That said, we believe that there is a strong comparative basis for expecting that welfare attitudes in Canada share some of the same characteristics as their neighbors south of the border.

### *Poverty and First Nations Communities*

Clearly there are structural similarities between poverty in the US and Canada, and Aboriginals in Canada face some of the same challenges as Blacks in the US. Like Blacks in the US, poverty among Aboriginal communities is not only particularly acute, it also has very specific historic precedents.

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<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that there aren't some important differences. One of the primary differences is that in the US, the main cash benefit program, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF; Formerly the Aid for Families with Dependent Children, AFDC) is restricted to recipients with a dependent child.

Citing a 2005 UN report, Helin (2006:103) writes that “Canada’s high ranking on the United Nations’ human development scale would dramatically drop from 7th to 48th (out of 174 countries) if the country were judged solely on the economic and social well-being of its First Nations people.” Indigenous people are statistically over-represented in all indicators of social wellbeing (such as unemployment, poverty and children in protective care). Indigenous peoples in Canada, as they are in the US, New Zealand and Australia, are amongst the poorest (Cornell 2006).<sup>5</sup> The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (1996) pointed to social and economic conditions for First Nations communities in Canada, highlighting the poorer life, health, educational and economic outcomes among Aboriginal people in Canada. For example, the 2006 Census shows that Aboriginal peoples (11%) are almost four times as likely to live in crowded homes as non-Aboriginal people, and three times more likely to live in homes needing major repairs (1 in 4) (Cloutier 2008, 6). These conditions are particularly likely on reserves. Almost half of First Nations people living on a reserve live in a home requiring major repairs (ibid, 8). Food insecurity is also much higher among Aboriginal households, especially those living off-reserve (Willows et al 2009). One in three off-reserve Aboriginals face food insecurity, compared to about one in ten non-Aboriginal households.

Income and employment are also major challenges for many Aboriginal people in Canada. Aboriginal incomes are substantially lower than non-Aboriginals, and these incomes have been declining over time (Drost and Richard 2003). Incomes seem to be particularly low among on-reserve Aboriginals.<sup>6</sup> Educational and employment outcomes for Aboriginals are also much less than non-Aboriginals. Since the early 1990s, unemployment among Aboriginals has been about 2.5 times higher than the average (Mendelson 2004, 19). While it is highest in the Maritimes, the rate relative to the total unemployment rate by region is highest in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta (ibid, 20). On reserve, unemployment rates have also tended to be among the highest in the west (alongside the North), with many communities experiencing a resounding 80% unemployment (Flanagan 2000: 175). Aboriginal peoples are about twice as likely as non-Aboriginals to have not completed a high school degree (Census 2006). Again, the rate of non-completion

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<sup>5</sup> Aboriginal peoples (including First Nations, Métis and Inuit) account for almost 4% of the Canadian population. The population is increasingly urban, with 54% living in urban areas, and Winnipeg has the largest urban population, followed by Edmonton (Census 2006).

<sup>6</sup> While both on and off reserve communities face serious social problems, those off-reserve tend to be better off (median income in 1996 census was \$12,400, 40% higher than on-reserve, but well below non-Aboriginal average of 19,400) These differences are more pronounced among men than among women (Drost and Richard 2003, 2-3). The worse differentials are in the Prairies. Both on and off-reserve incomes relative to non-Aboriginals declined from the mid-80s to mid-90s (ibid, 4)

is among the highest in northern and western Canada, with only 50% of Indigenous youth age 20-24 located off reserve in Manitoba having completed high school while on reserve the rate of non-completion tops out at a staggering 70% within Manitoba (Mendelson 2006, 24).

The RCAP notes that welfare dependence among Aboriginal people is two to four times higher than for Canadians more generally. For example, income support and housing subsidies were about 50% higher per Aboriginal person compared to the amount spent per Canadian based on 1992-1993 government expenditures (RCAP, Table 2.10). A similar gap is found for “remedial” programs including health care, social services, and police and correctional services. The report also notes the deterioration in economic conditions as well. In 1992-1993, 47% of registered Indian persons living on reserves were receiving social assistance, compared with 40 percent a decade earlier (ibid, Table 2.5). While they receive more social assistance, it should be noted that they receive less EI and CPP/QPP benefits than non-Aboriginals.<sup>7</sup>

For most, such statistics are not surprising given the racialization of poverty in Canada, as elsewhere. Yet the association of Aboriginals with poverty has rarely been seen as part of the larger racialization of poverty issue (and literature) in the US, but rather as symptomatic and/or the result of colonialism and Canada’s “Indian policy”.

As scholars such as Witherspoon and Satsewich (1993) note, colonialism entails the subjugation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples for the benefit of the capitalist expansion. In so doing, colonialism not only forcibly removed Indigenous nations from their lands, but it also entailed the destruction of their traditional economies. This destruction was not limited to subsistence economies. Governments openly engaged in the destruction of Indigenous industries such as agriculture and fisheries, even going so far as to forcibly remove Indigenous competition in industries by banning the sale of goods and commodities (such as wheat at handicrafts) without a federal permit and by limiting participation in the industry. For example, in the 1870s, farming was restricted to two acres and a plough and surplus lands were then sold or leased by Canada (see Buckley 1992).

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<sup>7</sup> The causes for this poverty are debated, but many authors point to colonialism and the subsequent destruction of Aboriginal communities. The RCAP notes how historical self-sufficiency was destroyed through loss of control over land and resources and unequal access to economic activities, business, education and training (see also Cornell 2006, Armitage 1995, Kendall 2001). Cornell (2006, 5) notes that the “supplanting these peoples has entailed enormous Indigenous resources losses, the eventual destruction of Indigenous economies and a good deal of social organization, precipitous population declines, and subjection to tutelary and assimilationist policies antagonistic to Indigenous cultures.”



For Alfred (and others), such policies paved the ground for the economic dependency that we see today today (Alfred 2009: 46).

Colonial policies are therefore seen as fundamental antecedents to Aboriginal economic dependence, characterized by the perverse expectation that the colonial (or post-colonial) power is responsible for those it has made dependent. Helin (2006: 116) for example, argues that such policies have resulted in an “unhealthy focus on the federal government” and a “deeply ingrained culture of expectancy”. In short, there is an expectation that all means for ordinary existence (social assistance, housing, education, medical and dental care, community infrastructure finance, and finance for the operation of community governments, etc.) will be provided eternally, with no expectation that effort must be expended or such items earned. This culture of expectancy has become an intergenerational welfare trap - a dependency rationalized by “treaty rights” (Flanagan 2000: 175).

This welfare trap is not limited to social assistance, but to the totality of services that create and maintain the dependency (Flanagan 2000: 174-175; Helin 2006: 177). Thus, colonialism — or rather, government policy and the failure (of governments and or Indigenous peoples) to assimilate — is often seen as a key contributing factor to understanding poverty among Aboriginal communities. Yet, colonialism is often, as some of the authors reviewed here reflect, linked in the more recent past with a discourse about dependency that points at Aboriginal peoples as culturally accepting of their situation (see Flanagan 2000, Helin 2006, Widdowson and Howard 2008). Widdowson and Howard (2008) even go so far as to argue that Aboriginal cultures are not only accepting of this dependency but that they (as ‘primitive cultures’) are the root cause of such dependency as they do not allow for economic and social advancement. While Widdowson and Howard’s core arguments might easily be tossed aside for their own cultural relativism, alongside Flanagan and Helin, they do illustrate the construction of a culture of dependency from the vantage of many Canadians. Indeed, a culture of dependency mirrors in important ways the larger cultural arguments in the US that paint the poor as undeserving, taking advantage of benefits that they would not need if they only tried harder.

### *Welfare Attitudes in Canada*

So how are welfare attitudes structured in Canada? While there has been some work looking at redistribution of wealth and support for the welfare state more generally in Canada (see, e.g., Soroka et al. 2007), work that focuses specifically on public support for social assistance is more limited. In previous work, we have shown that support for social assistance spending is consistently lower when labelled “welfare” rather than services for the poor (Harell, Soroka and Mahon 2008), a parallel pattern to what is found in the US (Smith 1987; Rasinski 1989;

Cook and Barret 1992; Soroka and Wlezien 2010). This suggests that the word “welfare” has negative connotations associated with it in Canada; though exactly what those connotations are in the Canadian context is not clear.

There is however some evidence that structural, rather than individual, attributions for poverty are more prevalent in Canada than in the US. Reuter et al. (2006) conducted telephone interviews in Toronto and Edmonton looking for public attributions for poverty. While about three quarters of their respondents mention structural explanations for poverty (such as the lack of a social safety net and discrimination), only about one-fourth attributed poverty to individual characteristics like laziness. This is in stark contrast to the US, where individual attributions tend to dominate.

Canadians’ general attitudes about the causes of poverty may tend to be more structural, then; though this does not preclude the racialization of welfare, and it is as yet unclear whether welfare is racialized in Canada in a manner similar to the US. That said, there are hints that views of Aboriginals may matter. Our previous work with a student sample suggested that (hypothetical) Aboriginal recipients receive less support than either Whites or visible minorities (Harell and Soroka 2010); and Banting, Soroka and Koning (N.d.) show that people who believe that greater numbers of Aboriginals are on welfare tend to be much less supportive of redistribution.

This should come as no surprise given that past work finds evidence that non-Aboriginals tend to associate negative stereotypes with Aboriginals. Psychological research shows that Aboriginals tend to illicit more negative responses as well as negative stereotypes. Explicit racism stereotypes such as poor, ignorant, dirty, stupid, unfriendly are associated with Aboriginals as a group, and the public often blames Aboriginals for the problems they face (see Kirby and Gardner, 1973; Mackie 1974; Gibbons and Ponting 1977; Bell, Esses, Maio 1996; Vorauer et al 1998).<sup>8</sup> There is thus good reason to expect that cuing Aboriginal stereotypes has a negative influence on welfare support.

That said, the welfare frame for Aboriginals is not just about stereotypes. These stereotypes feed into a larger discourse about how Aboriginals are see as taking advantage of benefits they receive (benefits they receive in part due to treaties and the federal government’s fiduciary obligations). Preceding sections have discussed the notion that welfare dependency among Aboriginals results from the act of receiving such benefits. Flanagan(2000: 176) notes that “[r]acism, discrimination,

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<sup>8</sup> Note however that Berry and Kalin (1995) show that Natives are not the least liked on the Canadian ethnic hierarchy, although they are clearly disadvantaged with respect to the people from the historic colonial powers.

cultural differences and poor education may play a part; yet other ethnic groups with similar problems have not become so ensnared in the welfare trap. We have to consider the cornucopia of benefits from the welfare state that flow only to Indians, and especially to Indians living on reserves” Widdowson and Howard (2008: 76-77) blame the “aboriginal industry” for perpetuating dependency as well as “primitive cultural practices” which both enable and maintain dependency. These perspectives make up a critical part of the welfare frame as applied to Aboriginal communities. It is the idea that despite what the colonial power has done to create the situation, it is in fact Aboriginal peoples (particularly leaders) themselves that are responsible for their subordination. Welfare itself is viewed as perpetuating dependency, especially among peoples who are economically, politically and culturally “under developed”.

It is both unsurprising and important, then, that recent work finds that both Aboriginal and immigrant frames are relatively prominent in newspaper coverage of welfare (Mahon 2009).<sup>9</sup> And one only needs to experience a small town on the edge of a reserve once to understand how rampant the general disregard for Indigenous peoples is, or, more so, the general contempt for those programs that mark their dependence (welfare, treaty monies, housing benefits). This contempt has been documented by academics (e.g., King 2005) but also by testimonials by Aboriginal peoples themselves. Such attitudes are both widespread and deeply engrained.

In sum, we expect that welfare attitudes in Canada are racialized; more specifically, we believe that support for welfare will be affected by whether or not the recipient is Aboriginal. Similar to cuing Blacks in the US, we expect that cuing Aboriginals in Canada will lead to a decrease in support for social assistance (H1). We suspect that this results from the activation of negative stereotypes that intersect with individualistic attributions of poverty. It should be the case, then, that cuing Aboriginals has a particularly large effect for respondents who show greater levels of explicit hostility toward Aboriginals (H2).

## Data and Methods

The data for this study are drawn from the 2011 Canadian Election Study online wave (N=767). All respondents were exposed to a welfare vignette which describes a fictional person named Wayne who is eligible for social assistance (see Table 1). The vignette includes a photo as well as a short description of the person’s situation. The experimental manipulation is whether or not Wayne is cued as

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<sup>9</sup> Note that while the immigrant frame receives similar use across media outlets (ranging from 4 to 11 percent), the Aboriginal frame was particularly evident in the *Winnipeg Free Press* (18%) compared to 4-10 percent in the other newspapers analysed.

being Aboriginal. For half the respondents, the man in the vignette is not identified in any way as Aboriginal. For the other half, respondents see the same picture (although the skin tone complexion has been slightly manipulated), but the text includes a reference to an Indian Reserve. Respondents are then asked whether they support Wayne receiving a cash benefit.

**Table 1. Experimental Manipulation**

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Now we want to ask you a question about an individual who is eligible for social assistance. Again, please read about his background, and tell us whether you support his application. . .

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<p><i>Version 1</i></p> <p>Wayne is 37 years old and rents a small apartment with his 13 year old son. He was born and raised in [fill PROVINCE]. After high school, he trained to be an automobile mechanic.</p> <p>Wayne has been without work for some time. He has run out of savings and has applied for social assistance. Under current rules, he will receive \$1250 a month and will have to take part in job training.</p>	<p><i>Version 2</i></p> <p>Wayne is 37 years old and rents a small apartment with his 13 year old son. He was born and raised <u>on an Indian Reserve</u> in [fill PROVINCE]. After high school, he trained to be an automobile mechanic.</p> <p>Wayne has been without work for some time. He has run out of savings and has applied for social assistance. Under current rules, he will receive \$1250 a month and will have to take part in job training.</p>
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Do you support or oppose Wayne receiving this assistance?

1 strongly support

2 somewhat support

3 somewhat oppose

4 strongly oppose

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To analyse the results, we use ordered logistic regressions where the 4-point support response is the dependent variable, and where higher scores indicate more support for “Wayne” receiving social assistance. The experimental treatment (Aboriginal cue or not) is the main — and indeed the only — independent variable in our first test of H1. In a second step, we add a 100-point feeling thermometer towards Aboriginals (recoded to deciles). This is added into the model to test both for a direct effect, and an interaction with the treatment to test H2. Finally, we re-test results with a more complete regression model, controlling for a number of potentially confounding variables, including gender (female=1), age (29 or less is reference), education (less than high school is reference), income (5 categories), region (dummies for Quebec=1 and the West=1), and including general welfare support, a 1-4 scale based on the following question: The welfare state makes people less willing to look after themselves (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree).

## Results

Table 2 presents the results of the ordered logit. In Model 1, we present a simple test of the effect of the experimental treatment on support for receiving social assistance. Based on the American welfare racialization literature, we expect a direct effect of cuing a welfare recipient as Aboriginal. However, as is clear in Table 2, we find no evidence that the (rather subtle) mention of the Indian reserve and the minor complexion change significantly reduce support.

**Table 2. Ordered Logit Models of Welfare Support**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Treatment	1.079(.148)	.228*(.144)	.195*(.133)
Thermometer (0-9)		1.217***(.069)	1.145*(.069)
interaction		1.229*(.101)	1.257*(.113)
Welfare Support			1.873***(.199)
Female			.891(.146)
Age 30-54			.902(.265)
Age 55+			1.524(.434)
Education: HS+			1.902**(.453)
Education: Univ			1.810*(.425)
Income (1-5)			.918(.062)
Quebec			.375***(.083)
West			.672*(.122)
cut 1	.041***(.012)	.141***(.065)	.340(.215)
cut 2	.173***(.039)	.626(.273)	1.685(1.029)
cut 3	1.456(.315)	5.883***(.2600)	18.278***(11.377)
N	766.000	715.000	631.000
ll	-820.729	-737.013	-613.548
r2_p	.000	.037	.093

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . Cells contain odds ratios with standard errors in parentheses, from an ordered logit regression model.

Model 2 provides a test of our second hypothesis. Recall that we are interested here in the possibility that (a) those who dislike Aboriginals are more hostile toward welfare because welfare is associated more generally with Aboriginals (as welfare is in the US with Blacks), and (b) those who are hostile towards Aboriginals are more likely to be affected by the racialized cue in our experiment. There is evidence of both effects here. When allowing for an interaction between treatment and the thermometer score in Model 2, we find that the treatment, attitudes towards Aboriginals, as well as the interaction between these variables all have statistically significant effects on support for welfare. Those who express more positive attitudes toward Aboriginals are

more likely to support social assistance. Those with more negative attitudes toward Aboriginals are also more likely to be affected negatively by the experimental treatment. These findings remain robust even after controlling for a host of other potentially confounding factors (see Model 3).

**Figure 1. Estimated Levels of Support for Welfare, across Aboriginal Thermometer Scores and Treatment Groups**

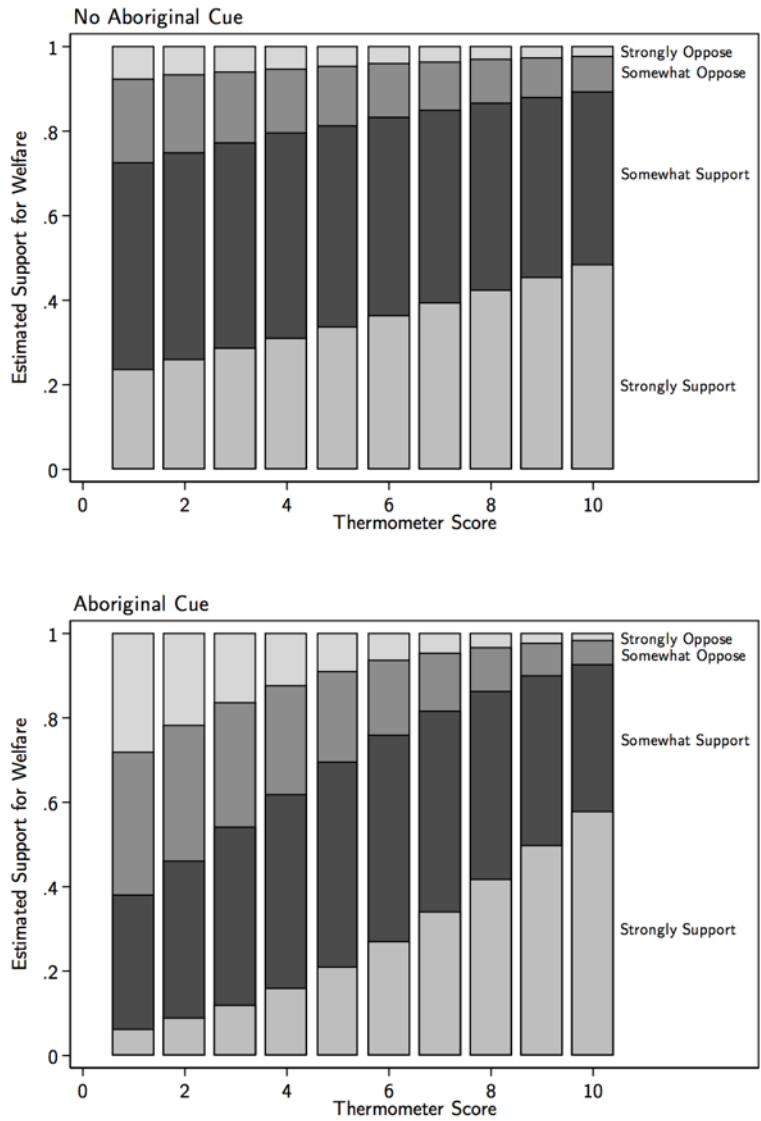


Figure 1 illustrates effect of the feeling thermometer and the experimental treatment on support for welfare, while controlling for the other variables in Model 3. The top panel shows the relationship between the feeling thermometer and support for welfare among those respondents who did *not* receive the Aboriginal cue. The number of respondents strongly or somewhat supporting welfare increases as attitudes toward Aboriginals become more positive; put differently, even

amongst those who did not see the Aboriginal cue, there is a relationship between being more supportive of Aboriginals and being more supportive of welfare. Note that overall support for welfare is high, however: even those who express strongly negative attitudes toward Aboriginals are largely supportive of social assistance benefits. We estimate over 70% of respondents in the most negative category of the Aboriginal thermometer score support social assistance.

The relationship between attitudes toward Aboriginals and social assistance becomes stronger when the Aboriginal cue is present, as shown in the bottom panel of Figure 2. Here, amongst those with the most negatively attitudes toward Aboriginals, less than 40% of respondents are favorable toward social assistance benefits. And the difference in the impact of the treatment generally is readily evident by comparing the upward trend in the top panel with the (much stronger) upward trend in this bottom panel. We see this as rather compelling evidence that racialized outgroup attitudes can effect support for welfare in Canada, at least when such attitudes are activated by racialized cues.

## Conclusions

This paper has set out to test whether racialized cues affect welfare support in Canada. We have argued that Indigenous communities are likely to be viewed by other Canadians as disproportionate beneficiaries of social assistance benefits. We have also argued that, like Blacks in the US, negative racial stereotypes associated with First Nations peoples are likely to intersect with the discourses about deservingness and dependency that underpins welfare attitudes. Our results partially confirm these views. Using a subtle but powerful experimental treatment, we have found that those who hold negative attitudes toward Aboriginal peoples are less likely to support welfare benefits — to a great degree when the hypothetical respondent is portrayed as Aboriginal, but to a small degree when the hypothetical respondent is not Aboriginal as well.

What does this mean for understanding welfare policy attitudes in Canada? Clearly, results suggest that at least some Canadians are less likely to support welfare if it is directed to Aboriginal people. That said, we should note that, unlike in the US where Black cues have a direct effect on support, we found no such effect in our study. In other words, there is no direct effect of the (albeit subtle) cue used here. Yet we do find that those hostile towards Aboriginals are less likely to support benefits, and that they are particularly affected by the cuing Aboriginal recipients. We take heart that this effect is restricted to those predisposed to dislike this target group. But results nonetheless suggest that public support for welfare may deteriorate if and when it is framed in a way that Aboriginals use of these benefits.

Note that our results may not be exclusive to Aboriginals in Canada. Our broader argument is that negative stereotypes often intersect with discourses about poverty to racialize the welfare policy domain, and that, particularly when combined with real socioeconomic disadvantages, these racialized discourses can have a profound effect on the ways in which redistributive policy is perceived by the public. We do not quite test this broader argument here; but it is worth noting that, amongst White respondents, thermometer scores for Aboriginals are not markedly lower than thermometer scores for “racial minorities.” (In the 2011 CES, mean scores for Aboriginals and racial minorities are 78 and 77 for white Anglophones, and 66 and 68 for white Francophones.) So perhaps the potential impact of attitudes about immigrants is as great; though past work does not yet point towards an effect where immigrants or racial minorities are concerned (Harell and Soroka 2010; Banting et al. N.d.). This is one subject for future work.

In the meantime, this paper makes clear the link between attitudes about Aboriginals and support for welfare in Canada. Clearly, the racialization of welfare documented in the US is not unique to that country. Attitudes about Aboriginals do affect support for welfare in Canada. Whether racialization of policy in Canada is unique to Aboriginals, or to welfare policy, remains to be seen.



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Appendix Table 1. Basic Demographics by Experiment Treatments

	Treatment 1	Treatment 2
<i>Gender</i>	%	%
% female	48.6	54.8
<i>Age</i>	%	%
18-34	8.9	8.6
35-54	32.8	35.5
55+	58.3	56.0
<i>Education</i>	%	%
HS or less	18.4	16.1
Tech or HS	31.9	35.4
University	49.7	48.5
<i>Region</i>	%	%
East	14.0	12.0
Quebec	19.3	15.2
Ontario	33.1	40.1
Prairies	17.8	17.4
BC	15.8	15.2