Chapter 12 – Conclusion

Novelist Doris Lessing's first book, *The Grass is Singing*, is not explicitly a work of social science. On the surface it is, rather, a fictional account of murder whose plot would fit on the cover of any sleazy tabloid: Mary, a town-bred British colonial, travels with her farmer husband to the African veldt and is slain there by a native worker. Yet the novel, like any good work of fiction, cannot stray far from the social sciences. Lessing grew up in South Rhodesia, and therefore has distilled into her tragic narrative what was, in essence, years of haphazard field research on race relations under the "colour bar."

Particularly interesting is the comparison she sets up between the novel's two bigoted protagonists, Mary and her husband Dick Turner. Although both are clearly white supremacists, and would never consider embracing equality with their African servants, their hostility stems from diametrically opposite sources. Dick, the country bigot, has little trouble interacting with his laborers as humans. Indeed, he is intimately tied to them, so much so that Mary is repelled by the resemblance (Lessing 1950, 69). These social links spawn Dick's bigotry, a pledge of fealty to the caste system that undergirds his livelihood.

By contrast Mary, the town bigot, holds no conscious commitment to either the oppression or the liberation of African natives (Lessing 1950, 45-46). She is shocked by their abstract status, yet feels no compulsion to improve it. The servants who do her bidding are strangers to Mary, another part of the hostile African terrain that she fears and misunderstands. Reflexively, she treats them with calloused disregard (Lessing 1950, 73, 80, 85). Her discomfort stems from ignorance, a notable lack of social links.

In her brief novel, Lessing has presented an artful paradigm for understanding racial conflict,

one that is both useful and parsimonious.[1] Her implicit hypothesis can be summarized as follows:

Familiarity does not breed contempt between races. Rather, ignorance is the source of fear, isolation

the source of misunderstanding. Yet the intimacy that comes from exposure is no guarantee of

peaceful relations or humane treatment. Either social traditions or just plain self interest is enough

to perpetuate conflict. That is, the social construct of race can isolate an enemy one knows, or define

a stranger as an inherent enemy.

Bigotry and the Social Context

The same dualism that Lessing expresses so artfully appears repeatedly within the social science

literature. Lipset and Raab (1978, 165), for example, distinguish "objective" and "subjective"

intergroup conflict. Objective conflict, the parallel to Dick's country bigotry, responds to concrete

social conditions such as intergroup competition over resources, and may even represent rational (if

unseemly or immoral) behavior (Lipset and Raab 1978, chap. 5). Mary's town bigotry, on the other

hand, is a form of subjective conflict. It carries a more ideological flavor; hostilities are aimed at

an abstract enemy who may pose no threat at all.[2] This same duality drives the debate over whether

American racism is symbolic, or the outgrowth of real intergroup competition.

These two diseases–objective and subjective bigotry–certainly do not imply the same cure, so

the distinction is not a trivial one. When faced with "objective" antipathies, the policy maker would

take steps to reduce intergroup conflict, perhaps by establishing a formal means for resolving

competition, or by reducing the frequency with which groups face a zero-sum game. When

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[1] In fact, Lessing's description of the mutual respect produced by exposure, portrayed through the microcosm of one household, corresponds to the actual pattern of race relations observed in South Rhodesia after World War II. Robert Blake (1977, 282) traces that country's measures against discrimination not to recent immigrants from Britain, but rather to "settled Rhodesians of the pre-war vintage."

[2] Although the term "objective" usually has positive connotations, in this usage it should not imply that one form of race-based conflict is necessarily worse than another. "Rational" ethnic conflict can be just as ugly, and perhaps even more intractable, than one based upon ignorance.

addressing "subjective" conflict, by contrast, a top-down policy promoting education or assimilation is more likely to succeed. No serious attempt to alleviate racial troubles can ignore their source and nature.

As useful as this conceptual distinction certainly is, however, diagnosis is not a simple matter–whether the analyst approaches ethnic relations historically or quantitatively. The pitfalls in fact are numerous. One is that the underlying basis of conflict may change over time. Just as two individuals who hate each other continually find new traits to despise (or, for that matter, just as two lovers continually find new traits to adore), so it is with groups of people. Hatreds outlast their source. Consider the problem of "anti-Semitism," which dates back to antiquity. Despite its long presence in the Western world, anti-Semitism is not a monolithic phenomenon. It has appeared in multiple incarnations, with surface similarities but also tangible differences. European history alone provides numerous instances of both "objective" Anti-Semitism based upon economic competition and "subjective" Anti-Semitism based upon unchallenged racial myth (Reichman 1939). Therefore tracing a conflict back to its origin carries no guarantee for understanding its current shape or implications.

Another discouraging obstacle is that both sorts of conflict on occasion produce the same symptoms: reactionary political movements, discriminatory laws and policies, murder. They also often appear in tandem. For example, heavy black migration into Chicago neighborhoods produced both sorts of bigotry among whites living there–conflict between races in the impacted areas, and negative stereotypes among those miles away from the site of social change (Pettigrew 1980, 9; Lipset and Raab 1978, 341). One sort of social distance may even produce the other. Material competition can widen the cultural gap among ethnic or racial groups (Lipset and Raab 1978, 341; Massey and Denton 1993, 165-72), while simple ignorance might exacerbate or even produce intergroup competition (Fredrickson and Knobel 1980, 53).

One last barrier worth mentioning is that ethnic conflict is much more complicated than any duality could possibly capture. Any model of human relations will face this complaint, of course, but in the case of race relations the problem is particularly severe. Conflict may have a materialist basis, but different sorts of "rational" conflict could carry widely differing policy implications. Conflict may have its basis in ignorance or psychological deficiencies, but the cure requires a deeper understanding than simply crying out that the Emperor has no clothes.

The research presented in this thesis was driven by a conviction that the conceptual distinction between rational and psychological group conflict, between objective and subjective bigotry, really matters if American society is ever going to repair the horrible racial gap that plagues it. It was also driven, however, by a certainty that the detail lurking under this parsimonious model could be even more important than application of the model itself. Even if we never fully understand the source of the disease, it is possible that we can treat the symptoms. Therefore this final chapter contains two parts. In the first to follow, I summarize my research as it relates to the theoretical distinction between rational group conflict and symbolic conflict. Naturally, linking specific empirical findings to a more abstract model of human relations cannot be a straightforward or purely "scientific" task. It requires uncertain inference based in part upon plausibility, upon reconciling numerous sources of information that cannot be combined quantitatively, and upon leaving some of the inferential steps for other research to evaluate more directly and formally than I can here. The chapter therefore includes a second section, in which I grapple with the implications of my descriptive findings, cut off from the theoretical considerations usually at the forefront of this work.

Beyond Dualities: The Nebulous Realm of Political Culture

We can begin with the facts. The geographical distribution of racial conservatism–whether measured as support for a race-baiting candidate, as opposition to candidates because they are

African American, as support for vestigial segregation laws, as self-reported opposition to affirmative action, or as the endorsement of attitudes that some call "symbolic racism"–does not conform to the expectations of either dominant perspective in the social science literature.

It is not generally true that whites become more racially conservative as they are surrounded by greater numbers of African Americans. I showed this at the precinct level for Louisiana, Georgia and Florida. I showed it using counties (or parishes) for Louisiana and Kentucky, and within survey data for the entire country. I showed it using congressional districts for Georgia, verified the main findings for Florida, and elsewhere have shown similar results using state legislative districts (Lublin and Voss 2000). It should be clear, then, that the "white backlash" or "racial threat" model of race relations no longer applies even in the Southern region from which scholars first derived it (let alone in the rest of the country, where it never amounted to much). Nor is the idea helped by a more complex analysis, allowing racial reactions to vary depending upon the strict economic resources of whites who might compete with blacks over jobs.

It is also not generally true, however, that racial conservatism lacks a structural basis. In every case for which I could contrast metropolitan whites with those outside the cities and suburbs, a persistent pattern emerged. Metropolitan whites show very little sensitivity to the racial demographics of their locality, and to the extent they do it cuts against the white backlash logic: racially isolated whites are marginally more conservative. Outside the cities, however, the white backlash pattern remains vibrant–whites in blacker counties are notably more racially conservative than those in whiter counties. Obviously this violates any naive psychological approach to racial attitudes, any expectation that a purely symbolic resentment would be randomly distributed across the population. Less obviously, but perhaps even more troublesome for the symbolic approach to racism, is that the pattern also cuts against the most likely political geography that might emerge from symbolic racism over time: that whites would be more tolerant because of racial contact, or that

whites would move away from ethnic groups they despise. The systematic patterns observed do not fit the observable implications of either argument: that exposure would lead to declining levels of racial conservatism more when the races were on equal terms, and that racial conservatives would appear near fewer blacks when the population is more mobile than when it was more stable. Psychological approaches fare badly.

We move beyond the realm of straight fact when trying to figure out what the pattern means, when trying to build theory rather than tear it down. From my perspective, the true puzzle is suburban exceptionalism. Some explanation is required to explain why racial conservatism thrives in the white suburbs and cities, despite their insulation from competing with local blacks. Nor are the tidy explanations that jump to mind particularly plausible.

For example, one reaction is to presume that cities are different because whites there have a wider point of reference than they do outside of urbanized areas. Whites have fled from inner cities to the suburbs, but they still look over their shoulders at the black-dominated metropolis they left behind; its lurking presence keeps them racially conservative. This conventional story, while not patently false, nevertheless builds upon questionable stereotypes. It presumes that racial dynamics strongly guide residential decisions: that people who stay in or move to cities tend to be racially progressive (rather than just poor, for example), that the main draw suburbs offer is their whiteness (rather than, say, good schools and greenery). It draws on an obsolete model of urban interaction, one in which suburbs were populated by refugees from heavily minority cities, and truly were part of the metropolis they circled. The former may never have been accurate for such a mobile society, and the latter is increasingly doubtful as sources of jobs, entertainment and shopping all decentralize. Finally, it draws on a limited understanding of how porous community borders are to modern rural and small-town whites, for communication, transportation and labor markets. Even if my limited evidence against the migration hypothesis were not sufficient for dismissal, it ought to sink under

the multiple qualifications clearly required by contemporary living patterns. Such an atheoretical argument, relying upon haphazard residential decisions, is not producing the patterns I observe so systematically for so many different sorts of metropolitan areas.

A second temptation is to appeal to history. Racial attitudes are sticky, and the South has a long history of racism, especially in the Black Belt where slavery and then Jim Crow segregation characterized relations for so long. Presumably rural areas follow a backlash pattern simply because whites today think what their parents taught them to think, so that this hereditary resentment (while distributed in a systematic geographical pattern) is just more evidence of racial conservatism's irrational basis. Again, this argument is not patently false. Certainly people's views change slowly if at all. Certainly the Black Belt contributes to my findings, since the blackest rural counties appear there. However, the backlash pattern I've found outside the cities does not deviate strongly across regions: it appears in the South but also outside it. I also found that the backlash reaction in Louisiana was stronger against black populations in *surrounding* parishes than it was to the black population with a white's own parish–which applied to rural as well as urban areas, and makes no sense if the backlash is little more than historical residue. Nor would the findings be so strong if I used racial demographics from one or two generations ago.[3] It seems implausible that this atheoretical explanation could account for my findings either.

Rather, the theory that seems most compatible with my results is one based upon cultural conflict. A combination of improving civil rights and economic changes has moved racial conflict from the localized nature it once displayed. Black demands no longer threaten their neighbors more than they threaten whites farther away; indeed, sometimes black political demands are the same as those advanced by nearby whites. To the extent a vibrant black voice in American life threatens anyone, it is not the whites who share their schools, their neighborhoods, the businesses they

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[3] An unreported portion of the Louisiana analysis, for example, was repeated with 1970 and 1980 parish racial demographics as well. The 1990 figures clearly correlated more strongly with white voting behavior.

patronize. Cultural conflict does not characterize, in other words, whites and blacks who have assimilated.

Whom does it threaten? In thinly populated rural areas (where whites typically enjoy fewer racial advantages in skills, and cultural change moves slowly) and in small-town America (where white and black spheres may be easier to maintain across town borders), we might expect greater ethnocentrism where such white enclaves are surrounded by a larger alien population. We might, for example, expect racial conservatism to thrive. This backlash pattern does not mean that familiarity breeds contempt; it simply means that outside metropolitan areas it is easy to avoid familiarity with outsiders. Urban areas seldom permit such sharp differentiation of small populations, however. Particular residential boroughs may be known for their Italian flavor, say, but business establishments and governmental institutions generally do not have such distinctive personalities. The population is simply too dense; rubbing elbows with strangers (of whatever race) and trusting them is part of living. However, if metropolitan areas lack differentiation at the lower level, they make up for it in differentiation across the city as a whole: across the real-estate market, across school systems. People know which are the "good" schools, they know the "nice" neighborhoods, they know the attractive counties. It is quite possible to inhabit the suburb of a large, and racially diverse, city and almost never come into contact with racial minorities.

White suburban neighborhoods are not neutral environments. Behavioral norms develop; habits of speech and interpretation emerge; context matters. Children growing up in them pick up different skills, different expectations about what life will bring them and what they can demand from it. How loudly does one speak in a room? How closely do two people stand in conversation? What makes music good, clothes trendy, jokes funny? If one gets in trouble, will parents be able to bail them out (literally or figuratively)? We do not think of these matters as politically important. But let a white-dominated company install an affirmative-action program, let one or two African Americans appear

on a scene where once they were absent, and the change will discomfit some people more than others. That discomfort can turn to frustration, anger–and one's cultural background would guide the reaction. Presumably the new black employees would feel more comfortable with some of their non-black coworkers than with others as well, so the distance or the closeness may only grow over time. This is only one example, but it illustrates that these cultural matters are indeed political.

Cultural conflict, as I have described it here, would explain why metropolitan counties and other counties would not behave the same way. Living patterns differ, occupational patterns differ, social isolation differs–exposure to a nearby black population therefore would vary. But is this conflict then merely subjective, a matter of knowledge versus ignorance, stereotype versus awareness? Not at all. The white middle-class subculture is real. White suburbs have identifiable norms, norms that a random white person can violate as easily as a minority–and these violations are recognized and understood by those holding them. Conforming to these norms is not always a matter of willpower or moral worth; it requires learning and that takes time. Even the norms that may seem objectively better, such as distaste for out-of-wedlock births or respect for education or maintaining a trim figure, require tradeoffs with other valued goods, and at any rate do not always hold obvious behavioral exigencies.

Judging people by their facility with white middle-class norms and skills is an accepted practice, unlike ethnic discrimination; it may be carried out directly (e.g., judging enthusiasm, attractiveness, fashionability, intelligence, viability as a mate) or indirectly (e.g., through reputation, through letters of recommendation that may be easier for some rather than others, through evaluating awards received or experiences garnered). These judgments may have racially disparate impact, especially in an area of social choice insulated from evaluation or accountability. Yet there is no guarantee that those implementing such social choice through snap judgments will take care to trace the connection between cultural traits and actual worth. There is no guarantee that one would refrain from using

cultural judgments even if patently irrelevant. Being part of the white middle class is a form of capital, unevenly distributed because of the different life experiences commonly faced by whites and blacks, and the value of that capital is a political matter (Merelman 1994).

This struggle may be at root a materialist conflict, a rational competition over social resources, but it is not the same as other forms of objective racial struggle observed in the past (e.g., during the civil rights movement). The cultural overlay alters the rules of the game, as compared to a struggle for political influence or for money. The most obvious difference is the possibility of escape from racial categories. Individual African Americans can display their fealty to white-dominated norms; they can rise to great influence and respect entirely within the bounds of the majority's values. Not only does this create exceptions to racial stratification, undercutting African-American unity and providing whites with opportunity for self-congratulation, it also confuses exactly who the underprivileged really are. So-called "white trash" may run afoul of cultural norms, whereas certain African Americans may have enjoyed almost as many advantages as any member of the white elite. It is precisely the cultural nature of this conflict that permits paradoxical social patterns: the rise of a vibrant black middle class at the same time that black employment stagnates (Chandra 2000); the existence of highly privileged black individuals, heavily sought by postgraduate educational institutions and by employers, at the same time that racial segregation as a whole has increased. Continued reliance on policies that ignore this bifurcation surely must help explain the declining moral legitimacy enjoyed by institutional efforts toward racial progress.

More importantly, a racial gap driven by cultural bias would not be addressed the same way as either racial conflict based on ignorance or racial conflict over other forms of status. Political struggle may be addressed by ensuring equal voting rights, for example, or by dividing voters up in some equitable fashion according to race. Economic struggle may be addressed by providing resources for black-owned businesses, to help equalize capital, or by banning discrimination, thereby

equalizing treatment. How can society provide equal culture? Certainly society can try to enforce conformity to one set of values, can even coerce youth into institutions intended to provide a common cultural background (as Protestant-dominated public schools were supposed to do with 19th-century immigrant populations). But it is not clear the United States would or should ever possess the political will for such an orthodoxy. Nor is it clear that an optimal common culture would emerge from centralized decision making. The best outcome for which one might hope, given the Cultural Backlash reaction observed in my data, is development of policies from which assimilation might emerge indirectly: a reemphasis on residential integration, a reversal of the trend toward greater school segregation, entertainment (e.g., festivals) that will attract a mixed-race clientele.

In sum, the Cultural Backlash phenomenon that I have hypothesized, and for which I have provided some empirical evidence, is practically distinct both from purely psychological forms of racial conflict and from other materialist forms of racial conflict.

Whither the Suburban Fortress?

Americans clearly desire racial progress, of some form or another. Less clear is the normative basis of this political demand. It could be to ensure social peace. It could be to eliminate suboptimal social choices, relative to a system that was fully individualistic. It could be to enjoy the unique benefits of cultural diversity. It could be to erase the scar of race, the guilt that otherwise taints the United States when dealing with other countries. Most likely, of course, the political demand has no philosophical basis, aside from a vague anxiety that racial differences simply aren't right.

Regardless of the origin of the political demand, however, the policy puzzle would always be the same: figuring out a way to promote tolerance, to promote (in other words) treating people with respect irrespective of their ascriptive traits. One vibrant research tradition in social psychology attempts to generalize about human behavior, seeking to establish (usually in the laboratory) that

individuals naturally create a distinctive social identity, one that provides them with beneficial group

membership (Taylor and Moghaddam 1994, chap. 4). I am skeptical whether uniform psychological

needs actually drive racial conflict, however. There is no clear reason group differentiation must

follow racial lines, after all, no reason for the continued stability and legitimacy of a particular social

divide (Taylor and Moghaddam 1994, 88). Diagnosis and cure therefore seem to require knowledge

of the particular intergroup conflict under study, familiarity with the context, and in particular an

awareness of how any given divide is arranged politically, economically, culturally, and

geographically.

Historical experience suggests that racial tolerance presents a mirror image of the dichotomy

between subjective and objective group conflict. Just as either experience or abstraction can produce

racial hostilities, depending upon the social structure in which interaction occurs, so can they induce

toleration. For every example of someone who was led to racial tolerance through spiritual

development or political education, we can find another who cast off intolerance in response to

personal interaction with members of an out-group.

For example, former U.S. Rep. Lindy Boggs–notably successful at representing a majority-black

district in Congress for several terms (Swain 1995, 171-78)–did not enjoy the typical upbringing of

a racial liberal. Born into a wealthy plantation family in Louisiana's Pointe Coupee Parish, the

former Corinne Claiborne almost exclusively met African Americans who were in a position of

servitude during her childhood.[4] Yet, if taken at her word, Boggs did not decide to champion civil

rights in reaction to any abstract search for justice. Rather, her direct experience with the

frustrations of her own servants (Boggs 1994, 226), not to mention witnessing their personal

competence and loyalty (Boggs 1994, 202), led the Congresswoman to her early moderation. By

contrast, antebellum abolitionists generally had little exposure to either slaves or former slaves.

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[4] Among the qualifications that Brewer and Miller (1984, 291-95) offer for the "contact hypothesis," one is
that the two races must interact from a position of equal status.

Often the first black man they met would be a traveling speaker, such as Frederick Douglass or Charles Lenox Remond, hired for that purpose by organizations opposed to slavery. Their egalitarian fervor often took on the traits of a moral crusade, in large part because it was an abstraction (McFeely 1991, 126-27).

Only armed with a sense of when and where racial polarization thrives can we reach an understanding of how to stop it, or even how to mitigate it. What stands out, across my empirical explorations, is the unique role played by heavily white communities insulated from a black presence. Regardless of whether one considers racial conflict "rational" or "psychological"–regardless of whether one adopts my theoretical conclusions–it is clear that emergence of the white suburban fortress is problematic. Whites in these communities have little opportunity for the sort of racial exposure that breaks down intolerance "objectively," and little incentive for a normative concern with racial problems that might break it down "subjectively." Thus the existence of Fortress Suburbia (the main reason no general white backlash pattern exists) is likely to persist. This reality carries certain political implications, whatever the cause, and whatever psychological need white isolation may feed.

The first is that it adds a normative dimension to a series of policies that otherwise would seem straightforward: road construction, zoning, taxation, school funding, etc. Suburbs did not spring from the ground full flower. They were a political creation, encouraged directly or indirectly by governmental institutions. Decentralization of real estate and job markets, for example, required numerous policy decisions: construction of interstate bypasses and other roads, maintenance of low gasoline prices (and taxes) even in the face of environmental damage and international market fluctuations, providing low-interest loans to veterans or cash-strapped whites to subsidize construction, expansion of municipal services, permitting and perhaps even subsidizing new growth in formerly forested or farmed land, externalizing the cost of abandoning property in undesirable

locales. Whether racially conservative whites moved to the suburbs or whites in the suburbs became racially conservative, whether suburban whites are unexpectedly conservative because their insularity breeds stereotype and prejudice or because they are realistically defending group privilege, it is certainly true that multiple levels of government cooperated with and even indirectly encouraged the creation of those enclaves. Awareness that these enclaves are more than just racially distinct, that they have also become politically distinct, suggests that government complicity ought to stop.

A second implication is that racial conflict has begun to overlap with other politically relevant cleavages in American politics, most notably the class divide. The GOP was able to become racially conservative without any severe loss of its base among the monied interests. Whereas once the incentive of American elites was to join with African Americans and promote racial progress, now their formidable class strength is arranged behind the party of racial reaction (a change particularly notable in the South). Thus numerous matters of electoral law–the role of money in political campaigns, the forces limiting political education and turnout among the masses, the ability of monopolistic political parties to dominate the electoral process–all take on a racial cast as well.

A final policy implication of the Cultural Backlash phenomenon, one with the heaviest geographical focus of all, is the construction of legislative electoral districts. As discussed in Chapter 9, America is embroiled in a contentious debate over how minorities (and especially African Americans) should be represented in a district-based electoral system. Should districts be drawn to collect minorities into ethnically distinct aggregations, such that racial conflict is carried out in the country's legislatures, or should those conflicts take place within the ballot boxes of heterogeneous legislative districts? Minority rights activists generally prefer gerrymandered districts, but they have a clear incentive to adopt such a position, since such districts tend to elect candidates with an ethnically based appeal such as themselves. My research suggests that majority-minority districts will carry a heavier cost than otherwise might be supposed, precisely because white racial

conservatives are rather populous in white suburban enclaves. Developing this argument requires some space, however, so the following subsection returns to the debate over racial redistricting first introduced in Chapter 9.

Cultural Backlash and the Future of Racial Redistricting

An uninformed observer, suddenly immersed in the acrimonious debate over racial redistricting, would think that defining each side's theoretical disagreements should be easy. Yet the media posturing isolates few pivotal questions, and the two sides dispute few factual matters. They agree, roughly speaking, that a third of white voters generally support black incumbents both in Democratic primaries and in general elections (Baxter 1996; Bullock 1996; DLC 1996; Fletcher 1996; Helton 1996; Rankin 1997; Tucker 1996). They also agree that voting is "racially polarized," in the sense that a majority of blacks support the candidates opposed by a majority of whites.

To win rhetorical victories, each side constructs a paper tiger, then flays it with facts everyone accepts. For instance, supporters of racial redistricting attempt to vindicate their position by suggesting that, even in black victories, candidate race influenced some white voters. But no one argues that racism is dead, and few deny that black candidates carry an extra burden to establish their credibility (Sigelman et al. 1995; Swain 1993). The legal issue, and to a large extent the policy issue, is whether white bloc voting consistently will prevent African Americans from backing winning candidates (Grofman, Griffin, and Glazer 1992; Grofman and Handley 1995, 234). If enough whites will vote periodically with a black minority, then the extent of racism among the remainder simply does not matter for redistricting purposes. Opponents of racial redistricting, by contrast, refute claims that "white people will not vote to elect black politicians" (Charen 1996), arguing that "blacks don't require black districts to win elections" (Smart 1996). But no one claims that black victories are *impossible* in white districts, just terribly unlikely (Davidson and Grofman

1994; Handley, Grofman and Arden 1998; Lublin 1997a, 1999).

Lurking beneath the word play are two empirical questions. The first is the extent to which race shapes white voting, as opposed to more neutral (but overlapping) factors such as incumbency, party identification or political ideology. The second is whether racial reaction, when it does appear, concentrates primarily on the racial identity of the candidate, on the racial identity of neighboring voters, or on issue positions related to race. Supporters of racial redistricting usually consider racial polarization a serious barrier to the election of black candidates, or at least to the quality of representation enjoyed by black voters. Opponents downplay the racial element altogether. Implicit within the literature is a third view, however, which is that polarization is quite vibrant but centered around race-based *issues*. Racial conflict may have mutated into a new strain, one embedded within the class structure, within residential patterns, and within the party system (Giles and Hertz 1994; Massey and Denton 1993; Palmquist and Voss 1997). Discerning among these three competing perspectives is not a mere academic exercise; the Supreme Court has used black candidate successes to justify striking down racial gerrymanders.[5] It is therefore worth exploring the meaning of my analysis for racial redistricting policy.

The white backlash phenomenon would hold clear implications for racial redistricting, regardless of the size community on which it centered. At the district level, the phenomenon would undermine any claim that "influence" districts can replace majority-minority enclaves as a means for increasing black influence. The benefit of spreading blacks around congressional districts to increase their electoral importance would be lost as whites mobilized against them. White backlash at the precinct level also would affect redistricting strategies. If whites in mixed precincts exhibit greater hostility to black interests, then ensuring black influence requires greater concentrations of minorities, since their immediate white neighbors would be those most likely to cohere in opposition.

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[5] Abrams v. Johnson 1997 U.S. LEXIS 3863.

The more likely these whites are to find black or liberal candidates acceptable, however, the more gerrymandering wastes black votes.

The evidence presented in this thesis indicates that whites do not become consistently more conservative as they are combined with blacks into precincts, counties or districts–not even in elections that bring race relations to the fore. Just the opposite is the case. Studies of roll-call congressional voting back up this finding at the mass voting behavior level. The best recent work in the area does not find that representatives become more conservative as their white-majority districts diversify, as would be true if whites coalesced into a conservative bloc as blacks increased. Rather, they find monotonic increases in the liberalism of representatives as black density rises (Cameron, Epstein and O'Halloran 1996, 803; Overby and Cosgrove 1996; Lublin 1997b). Nor does the probability of Democratic candidate success ever drop as black density rises (Lublin and Voss 2000), apparently because no backlash kicks in. One is forced to conclude that racial gerrymandering does more than simply pack black voters into ethnically distinct aggregations. It also throws in a large number of white Democrats as well. That is, racial redistricting not only carries significant costs for society as a whole,[6] it even impairs black political success within Congress and numerous state legislatures by undercutting their natural allies.

Once one understands that the absence of traditional white backlash only means that we have moved to a more cultural form of backlash, it becomes clear that black advances in Southern politics are not cause for much optimism. The candidacy of a black Democrat may do little to polarize voting, but primarily because Southern whites avoid most Democrats. Blacks may be able to win

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[6] Racial redistricting results in the election of a few representatives that are highly responsive to African Americans, but reduces black influence over the House as a whole (Grofman, Griffin, and Glazer 1992; Grofman and Handley 1989; Lublin 1997b). The resulting districts make it difficult for minority politicians to construct a portfolio with national political appeal. That is, diversity at one level may undermine it at a higher level. Race-based mapping also forces the resolution of social conflict *within* American governmental institutions rather than outside them (e.g., through the compromises of electoral coalition building). The middle of the ideological spectrum has faded from Congress, increasing the likelihood of "gridlock" (Brady and Volden 1998, 26; McDonald 1999).

primaries in the sort of district that once would have defeated them, but primarily because so many whites have ceded the field. Whites in less segregated locales may have found a strained peace with their black neighbors, but they are few (Massey and Denton 1993); whites generally lack the contact that might reduce intergroup conflict (c.f., Miller and Brewer 1984b). Whites may vote based upon partisan affiliation and class interests rather than overt racial hostility, but group differences on these matters emerge from systematically divergent experiences (Kinder and Sanders 1996, chap. 6). Class interests overlap heavily with racial interests, now that the middle class has become thoroughly suburbanized, so the party system mostly subsumes racial conflict (Giles and Hertz 1994; Palmquist and Voss 1997).

Even black electoral victories in the South probably stem from a negative development: the rising power of white conservatism in the Republican party has allowed temporary black success under the Democratic label. Credit for recent black success, as well as future black opportunities, may be grounded in the Republican realignment that has swept the white South. Cynthia McKinney, for example, won in her 1996 Georgia district for structural reasons that have nothing to do with incumbency. She was running in a 41% black district that is almost guaranteed to elect a Democrat (Handley, Grofman and Arden 1998, 28-33), and likely to elect an African-American Democrat, with or without an incumbent (Cameron, Epstein and O'Halloran 1996, 804). Blacks govern the Democratic primary in her district, and loyal Democrats of both races govern the general election. My EI analysis of McKinney's 1996 campaign suggests that only 12.4% of eligible whites chose to vote in the Democratic primary (standard error of 0.6), ceding the field to black voters who were enthusiastic (i.e., 93.6%) McKinney supporters. Very few sympathetic whites were needed to give the nomination to a black candidate. Since many whites who sit out the primary prefer to vote for a Democrat in the general election, regardless of the candidate's race, these results suggest that non-incumbents could replicate McKinney's success elsewhere. More generally, the major partisan shift

among southern whites in 1994 greatly harmed the Democrats, but left African Americans greater

influence in Democratic primaries. This is true not only in districts where they constitute more than

30-35% of the population, but also in entire Southern states–such as South Carolina in 1996, where

blacks formed a majority in statewide Democratic primaries for the first time ever.[7] Yet if cultural

conflict drives whites into the Republican party, this phenomenon will lose its beneficial character.

In other words, I make no claim the white South has changed *for the better.* A white majority

still jousts politically with a black voting bloc, posing a dilemma for those wishing to improve

substantive representation for African Americans. All I claim is that racial polarization spreads out

over a wider geographical and cultural terrain that historically has been true, because racial conflict

has shifted from a traditional backlash pattern to a Cultural Backlash that implicates the suburbs and

the Republican party that white suburbanites tend to support. Changes in the white South have

institutionalized polarization residentially, making racial redistricting a worse strategy then ever

before.

Summary

Too many scholars assume, because racial conservatives report ignorance and prejudice, that

education is a valuable method for combating the political views that stereotypes characterize. My

results suggest the need for a fundamental reconsideration of American racism. Racial stereotypes

operate in service of rational motives, a conflict over cultural values that carries real political

implications, and therefore are not likely to fold in the face of disconfirming evidence (no matter

how persuasive). They are not likely to dissolve in the face of an education cultivated at a distance,

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[7] The 1996 Democratic primary included 99,224 whites and 107,160 non-whites. Roughly 69% of whites
selected the Republican primary in that year. The 1998 election again saw a white majority in the Democratic
primaries, but this 2,000-vote advantage was attributable to much lower non-white turnout, not to a change in
white loyalties. If anything, the election solidified South Carolina Republicanism, since 70% of whites chose
that party's primary.

in predominantly white suburban schools or by watching well-meaning television programs.

The only type of "education" in which I have any faith, based on the results reported in this thesis, is the sort that lessens the fundamental cultural divide perceived between whites and blacks in America. The sort of assimilation that this involves would require a radical restructuring of residential patterns, as well as an alteration of the recreational insularity that both whites and blacks commonly pursue. It also seems to require greater political commitment to residential integration, since few whites and blacks reside in close-enough proximity for cultural assimilation to change American attitudes. Finally, it requires the end of racially gerrymandered electoral districts, which allow most white politicians to ignore minority (and white urban) demands because they represent few such voters. These needs would be present even if I am wrong about the importance of cultural conflict in contemporary race relations, because one way or another the white suburbs and small towns of America have started to exhibit an unexpected racial conservatism. These implications are ultimately much less sanguine, I think, than the tone that usually underlies racial discourse within the discipline–because impulses without a defined structural basis would be much easier to combat than what I have found.