Chapter 3

When White Southerners Converse About Race

James H. Kuklinski

Michael D. Cobb

Like other authors in this volume, we examine white Americans' attitudes toward African-Americans. Unlike the other chapters, this one focuses on one region of the country: the South. Whereas the other authors use time-tested, individual-level measures of prejudice and racial attitudes, we employ a new and thus untested methodology that is best suited for group comparisons such as those commonly found in psychology. We seek an answer to one question: how much racial prejudice is there in the South these days?

Others have asked the same question, of course; as we outline below, there are good reasons to pose it yet again. First, although researchers have presented considerable evidence in support of their answers, the evidence itself has been contradictory. Second, and more crucially, much of the evidence has taken the form of responses to directly-asked survey questions: "Do you favor or oppose black people living next door?" "Do you favor or oppose interracial marriages?" Answering such questions, we argue, is akin to participating in a two-way conversation. Just as people anticipate what to say and what not to say in everyday conversation, so do respondents often account for what they believe to be the interviewer's expectations. The typical survey conversation, in other words, can preclude respondents from speaking openly, especially when they believe they hold views contrary to the person asking the question. To ensure openness requires changing the nature of the survey conversation itself.

A "New South"? The Contradictory Evidence

The 1960s and early 1970s are widely viewed as the nadir of black civil rights (Sitkoff 1981). No region received more attention than the South. From the Montgomery bus boycott to sit-ins and public demonstrations, southern blacks and white civil rights workers forced the entire nation to take notice that they would no longer tolerate the elaborate set of Jim Crow laws peculiar to the South. White and black Americans watched in horror as television played and replayed images of local southern police confronting and often physically beating black protestors. Unwavering civil disobedience eventually forced the national government to intervene, and by 1965 Congress had passed and imposed strong anti-discrimination laws

guaranteeing black Americans the most basic of rights: to vote, to sit at the front of a bus, to attend colleges of their choice, to sit at luncheon counters reserved only for whites. The (often televised) scenes of federal marshals confronting local officials throughout the South symbolized the government's resolve to implement these new dictates at all costs.

By many accounts, these highly visible activities brought about a tidal wave of change in white southerners' attitudes. Several national surveys documented dramatic declines in southern prejudice and intolerance (Greeley and Sheatsley 1974; Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985; Tuch 1987), indeed to the point that some scholars and practitioners proclaimed the emergence of a "new South" that is nearly indistinguishable from the rest of the country in its racial attitudes (Firebaugh and Davis 1988; Reed 1993). If a set of strong antidiscrimination laws is one legacy of the civil rights movement, an undeniable reduction in racial prejudice among whites, especially southern whites, is another.

But just how real is this second legacy? Another view of the political landscape raises doubt. It was during the height of the civil rights movement that George Wallace used his widespread support among white southerners to gain prominence as a national figure. Wallace did not hesitate to express hostility toward blacks and, even more, toward the intervention of the national government in the South's affairs. Soon thereafter, an all white southern jury tellingly found Byron De La Beckwith, an avowed white supremacist, innocent of killing Medgar Evers, a black civil rights activist. More than three decades later, it took a highly visible national campaign by Ever's wife to secure a retrial; this time a mixed jury faced with a national audience and seemingly incontrovertible evidence found him guilty.

Each of these examples—and there are plenty more—can be interpreted as manifestations of racial prejudice. More importantly, it is not at all obvious why the many activities of the 1960s and 1970s, most consisting of the national government meddling in white southerners' lives, should have reduced racial animosity. Did southern whites simply concede defeat? Did the government interventions magically lead white southerners to see the light? Did cries for justice and equality so raise the discomfort level among prejudiced southern whites that they felt compelled to change their attitudes? Did white southerners unconsciously absorb the new set of racial norms that the civil rights legislation clearly articulated? If southern white adults did change their attitudes, did they also decide to socialize their children in accordance with a new set of norms orthogonal to those by which they had lived?

Or, contrary to all of the above, did the government intrusions on behalf of black Americans increase the level of anger and hostility? Imagine southern whites who are also prejudiced [1] watching the events of the 1960s and 1970s unfold. They see blacks walking into all-white universities, their universities, with the help

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[1] We have chosen our words carefully. To be a white southerner is not necessarily to be prejudiced. In fact,

of federal marshals. They see northerners organizing protest movements in their cities. They hear their own public officials condemn if not visibly oppose the activities. That white southerners observing such events should become less racially prejudiced is not at all obvious.[2] To be sure, the force of law, when applied, helped to prevent overt discrimination, but, ironically, it also could have exacerbated ill-will and racial resentment.

Consider, moreover, southern voting patterns, indicators of actual behavior, during the time these events took place. Carmines and Stimson (1989) and Huckfeldt and Kohfeld (1989) document the steady withdrawal of southerners out of the Democratic party throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Not coincidentally, this withdrawal began in 1964, when Democratic officials and civil rights activists mobilized African-Americans and brought them into the fold. Also not coincidentally, it was during the 1964 presidential campaign that the Republican candidate, Barry Goldwater, sent unmistakable if not fully explicit signals that blacks no longer would be welcomed with open arms. As more and more blacks entered the Democratic coalition, more and more white southerners left it. Today the white South is heavily Republican. To be sure, a Republican white South is not prima facie evidence of a prejudiced white South (contrast Abramowitz 1994 with Carmines and Stimson 1989). It is the circumstances under which white southerners shifted their party loyalties that raises suspicions.

Finally, there is the anecdotal evidence. In his field study of changes in southern culture brought about by civil rights legislation, Wirt (n.d.) describes a situation that vividly illustrates how racial prejudice can exist below the surface. Wirt was invited to a private dinner party that some of the white subjects in his study hosted. These subjects were wealthy, upper-class businessmen. At some point, one of the spouses inadvertently changed the conversation to race and Martin Luther King's birthday. Some of the guests who were not subjects in the study, assuming Wirt was "one of them," soon began using unmistakably racist language to describe African-Americans. Although the dinner hosts successfully changed the topic of conversation, the change came too late. Wirt writes (n.d., p. 322) that

> [the hosts'] faces promptly fell at this turn in the conversation; after much frowning, one
> finally reminded them that the author would quote them by name for such language. Of
> course, the author noted he would not, but the account is fascinating as it is evidence of a
> widespread black suspicion.

The problem with anecdotal accounts, of course, is that they are not a representative sample of anything. Perhaps Wirt happened upon a rare occurrence not to be found throughout the South. However,

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many whites in the South have participated in black civil rights activities.
2 We are not arguing that different types of causal factors, such as increased education and the immigration of non-southern whites into the region, failed to reduce the level of southern prejudice.

during his field research, Dov Cohen, co-author of a recent book on southern culture (Nisbett and Cohen 1996), found that southern whites routinely probe others, especially outsiders, to discover whether they can frankly express their racial views (personal communication). In other words, open and sincere conversation about race is conditional. Assuming for the moment that Cohen is correct, let us now consider the nature of a survey interview.

Survey Interviews as Conversations

Although not usually portrayed as such (but see Schwarz 1993), survey interviews are conversations. Granted, one person asks all the questions and the other provides the answers, which differs from the give-and-take of everyday conversation. But interviews are conversations nonetheless.

When conversing with familiar others, we do not consciously ask ourselves, "Can we talk?" We know that we can. More to the point, we know what it is we can and can not talk about, and what we can and cannot say. We have all heard the proverbial, "we are good friends who don't talk politics" or, alternatively, "I never speak my mind when we talk politics." In the first instance, the individuals have concluded that they "can't talk." In the second, at least one of the individuals has determined that he or she "can't talk sincerely."

How is it that people reach such conclusions? First, those involved in conversation decide whether they share a common perspective, in this case, on politics. Second, if they believe they do not, then they consciously or unconsciously calculate the costs associated with talking sincerely and indeed with talking at all. In both of our examples, the conversationalists recognize they do not share similar views on politics; they also anticipate that open disagreement about politics will create conflict if not permanently damage their friendship. Consequently, the involved individuals never broach the topic or at least one of the conversationalists eschews candor just to avoid disagreement.

So it is with respondents asked to answer survey questions. Consciously or unconsciously, they ask themselves what the other person in the conversation, the interviewer, thinks. Suppose they conclude that the interviewer shares their views. Then the respondents will openly express their sincere opinions on the relevant survey questions, much as Wirt's dinner guests did to each other. In this case, private opinions and public opinions are one and the same because respondents not only "talk" but "talk sincerely."

But suppose the respondents suspect they do not hold the same views as the interviewer, or they don't know if they do. Then they might reach any of three conclusions: (1) "we can talk sincerely;" (2) "we cannot talk sincerely," or (3) "we cannot talk at all." If respondents believe that expressing their private views publicly entails no or only minimal cost, they will "talk sincerely." If they perceive a cost, however, "not talking sincerely" or "not talking at all" become more probable options. In the extreme, if respondents

believe that saying what they really think will land them in jail, the prudent thing to do might be to remain silent or express publicly opinions contrary to their private opinions.

Expressing prejudiced views does not lead to jail confinement or any other type of physical reprimand, so why would people who hold such views even ponder whether they can "talk" or, more relevant here, "talk sincerely" to the interviewer? What are the perceived costs that might preclude them from perfectly translating their private opinions about race into public ones?

Wirt's story identifies one: public exposure. Just as Wirt's subjects feared that their names would appear in print, so might prejudiced survey respondents fear that the interviewer or those in charge of the study will publicly reveal their answers. Promising anonymity will not comfort suspicious survey participants, especially if they believe the interviewer to represent a widely-held norm to which they themselves do not subscribe. Some individuals might not distinguish between prejudice and discrimination, and thus believe the former to be illegal. Although academic researchers know they will use the data to conduct statistical analyses, most respondents do not. From their perspective, not talking sincerely is wise.

Immediate condemnation is another possible cost. Suppose a respondent is asked to agree or disagree with the statement, "I oppose blacks living in my neighborhood." Blind to the ways of survey research, this individual might anticipate a critical reaction from the interviewer if he or she answers "agree." After all, this is precisely what happens in daily conversation. Again, social scientists know this will not happen; and again, there is no reason all others should.

Finally, for respondents who perceive their own (prejudiced) opinions as contrary to the dominant view, answering sincerely to an outsider can feel uncomfortable even when condemnation or public exposure is not expected. Scholars themselves might refrain from expressing a minority view if they sense that almost all of their colleagues strongly disagree with it.

Of course, respondents will weigh these potential costs differently (MacKuen 1990). Our purpose is not to predict what weights different individuals will use. Rather, we simply have tried to show that a respondent, when engaged in a survey conversation about race, quickly could conclude that "we can't talk sincerely."

Figure 3.1 summarizes the preceding discussion in the form of a simple decision tree. In two of the possible situations—respondents believe they share the dominant view as represented by the interviewer or they believe otherwise but see no costs associated with expressing their true thoughts—private opinion becomes public opinion.[3]

(figure 3.1 about here)

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3 A more elaborate schematic would include probabilities.

In the third case, however, where respondents believe that talking sincerely will be costly, the translation of private into public opinion takes one of two forms: either respondents refuse to express an opinion at all or they offer an insincere opinion. Private opinion does not perfectly translate into public opinion. In Kuran's words (1988, 1996), the interviewee engages in preference falsification.[4]

Encouraging Sincere Survey Conversation

Method and Logic

What we seek, then, is a way to conduct surveys that encourages respondents to "talk sincerely" with the interviewer about their racial attitudes. In light of our preceding discussion, the optimal solution would be to use interviewers with whom the respondents personally know they can speak freely; for each respondent, find a trusted acquaintance who shares the respondent's views. This obviously infeasible approach, at least for a national survey),[5] would approximate the dinner setting among friends that Wirt describes. The next best solution is to reduce if not eliminate the perceived costs of speaking freely. That is the approach we employ here. It entails encouraging respondents to "talk sincerely" about race by precluding the interviewer from knowing what they actually said.

Operationally, we randomly divided the Race and Politics sample of the general population into three parts. One third were presented with a list of three items and asked to say how many of the items make them angry—not which specific items make them angry, just how many. The specific items are: (1) the federal government increasing the tax on gasoline, (2) professional athletes getting million-dollar contracts, and (3) large corporations polluting the environment. The other two groups received the same list plus an additional item about race and then also indicated the number of items that make them angry. In one case the race item is "a black family moving in next door," in the other, "black leaders pushing for affirmative action." In this chapter, we focus on the former, which is our measure of racial prejudice. With the exception of the additional race items, the instructions and the wording of the items in the three conditions are identical.

Just how does this simple format encourage the interviewee to converse forthrightly? Suppose, for the sake of argument, that a respondent in the four-item condition takes exception to two of them, of which one is the race item. It will seem impossible to him or her that the interviewer could know that the race item is a source of anger. And indeed the interviewer cannot tell in the course of the interview if the race item

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4 Kuran proffers two provocative claims that relate to race. First, preference falsification has grossly exaggerated the support for affirmative action. Second, it has portrayed the general citizenry as considerably less prejudiced than it is.

5 Gough and Bradley (1993) come close to this approach in their small-scale study of racial attitudes. They use assessments of close acquaintances to measure attitudes, rather than have the acquaintances actually conduct interviews.

angered the respondent. (As we demonstrate below, however, the data analyst can estimate afterwards the level of anger in the population as a whole and in strategic subsets of it.)

Even then, why should respondents give truthful answers? Why not simply take the safest possible route and not identify the race item as one that evokes anger? Kuran (1988, p. 1532) provides one answer: "[p]reference falsification is costly to the falsifier, in that it entails a loss of personal autonomy and a sacrifice of personal integrity." By nature, people would prefer to tell the truth, to say what they really think. When they feel they cannot, they lose something of themselves. Moreover, and in the same vein, Schwarz (1993) has demonstrated that people generally try to give interviewers the information they supposedly are looking for. Once they agree to be interviewed, respondents feel strongly inclined to cooperate. In short, prejudiced respondents likely feel torn between two opposing inclinations: "talk sincerely" and "do not talk sincerely." We designed our survey experiment to reduce the force of the latter.

Validity and Reliability

Our approach to increasing sincere conversation raises numerous validity and reliability questions. We have devoted considerable effort both to identifying the problems and overcoming them (not always successfully), and discuss theses matters elsewhere (Kuklinski and Cobb 1997); two warrant comment here.

First, critics have questioned the wording of our instruction, which asks people to indicate the number of items that make them angry. This instruction sets a higher threshold than asking people, say, to indicate how many items they oppose. Since opposing a black family moving in next door is on its face a valid measure of racial prejudice, it therefore follows that we have underestimated the true level of racial animosity.

We plead both guilty and innocent to the charge. On the one hand, our own exploratory studies have revealed that using the term "oppose" increases the estimated percentage of prejudiced people by 10 percent or slightly more. This significant jump strengthens rather than weakens our central thesis. On the other hand, we chose the term "make you angry" because it more closely fits the classic conception of racial prejudice (Allport 1954), which defines white racial prejudice in affectual terms, as a strong, negative reaction to blacks. Even stereotyping, which many contemporary authors use to measure prejudice, is increasingly (and once again) seen as having a strong affective component (Mackie and Hamilton 1993).

Moreover, attitudinal measures that predict behavior have more intrinsic value to social scientists than those that do not. Stangor (1990) has shown that measures tapping the affective dimension of prejudice perform much better in this regard than those tapping the cognitive dimension.

Second, because they have not agreed on a conceptual definition of racial prejudice, researchers have

not and probably will not agree on a common set of survey questions. Consequently the choice is left to the individual's discretion. We asked respondents to react to "a black family moving in next door," which conceivably conjures a different mental image than "black people moving into your neighborhood" or "black teenagers dating white teenagers" (to take just two of many possibilities). These latter activities, one might argue, will anger prejudiced whites considerably more than the idea of a single black family moving in, which once again leaves us vulnerable to the criticism that we underestimated the level of prejudice (but see Schuman and Bobo (1988), who use a measure similar to ours).

What to do, given what currently is an almost intractable problem? Both before and after completion of the Race and Politics Survey, we undertook a series of exploratory studies to ascertain the effect of changing the wording of the race item. We included "black people moving into your neighborhood" in some of them and "black teenagers dating white teenagers" in others. Interracial dating appears to evoke the most anger, but we found little difference in the responses to the "black family" and "black people" items. All of this suggests that racial prejudice might fall along a kind of Guttman scale: everyone who negatively reacts to a black family moving in next door also becomes angry at the thought of interracial dating, although not everyone who deplores interracial dating also rejects a black family moving in. If this is indeed the character of prejudice, it raises a challenging question: are those who become angry at both thoughts more prejudiced than those who become angry at only the one? In the name of avoiding yet additional complications, we will not pursue an answer here.

Racial Prejudice in the White South

The researcher can use analysis of variance or the equivalent regression analysis to determine what the level of prejudice among a selected group is and whether that level is statistically significant. The simplest model consists of a dependent variable—number of items named—and one independent variable—experimental condition. The regression equation takes the form

$Y = A + BX + E$, where

Y = number of items

X = condition (1 if black family, 0 if baseline)

The intercept provides an estimate of the average number of items in the baseline condition; the intercept plus the slope of X provides the equivalent estimate in the test condition. That is, the intercept equals the baseline condition mean and the sum of the intercept and the coefficient equals the treatment condition mean. Thus, the coefficient alone $((A + B) - A)$ estimates the level of anger toward the black family item.

When applied to white southern respondents, this model provides the following parameters:

$$Y = 1.95 + .42 \text{ (Condition)}.$$
$$(.08) \quad (.11)$$

The average number of items named in the baseline condition is 1.95, out of a possible maximum of 3.00. More relevant here, the regression coefficient indicates that about 42 percent of white southerners express anger at the idea of a black family moving in next door. Merely asking about a single black family moving in elicits a strong visceral reaction from nearly half of the South's white adult population.

Ideally, the next step would be a comparison of white southerners' racial attitudes with those of whites living in the remainder of the country. The appropriate regression equation then is

$$Y = A + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_1X_2 + E, \text{ where}$$

Y = number of items

X_1 = condition (1 if black family, 0 if baseline)

X_2 = region (1 if South, 0 if non-South)

The interaction term, X_1X_2, is especially important in this equation. If significant, it indicates an interaction between condition and region, i.e., racial prejudice is greater in one region than the other. In this case, B_1 is the estimate of racial prejudice in the non-South and $B_1 + B_3$ the estimate for the South.

Unfortunately, we cannot conduct this analysis. As we have reported elsewhere (Kuklinski et al 1997; Kuklinski, Cobb and Gilens 1997), the baseline mean among non-southerners is 2.24, which indicates that many people identified all three baseline items as anger-provoking. Presumably all three baseline items angered an equal number of respondents in the test condition. If these individuals also reacted to the race item, then their sincere answer would be four items, or all of them. Any incentive to "talk sincerely" that our methodology originally provided is gone; some people might still decide to talk sincerely, but others might choose only to "talk."

Therefore, we used an alternative procedure to estimate the level of prejudice among whites outside the South (see Kuklinski et al. 1997). Admittedly less desirable than the original methodology itself, this iterative procedure estimates that one in ten white non-southerners expresses prejudice as we measure it. Some will deem this estimate low, and we ourselves expected a higher percentage. On the other hand, our requirement for being placed in the prejudiced category—get angry at the idea of a single black family moving in next door—is demanding, as we have already noted. Moreover, even 10 percent translates into millions of non-southern whites who express out-and-out hostility toward blacks.

It is in this context that the estimate of prejudice among white southerners should be interpreted. Even though we defined racial prejudice narrowly, more than four out of ten southern whites passed the test. Apparently they were willing to converse sincerely, given the opportunity to do so, and what many of them

said is not unlike what the dinner guests inadvertently said in Wirt's presence. This said, it should not go unnoticed that a majority of southern whites, presumably also talking sincerely, do not express animosity toward black people (again, as we have measured it).

We must also emphasize what we are not saying here: that southern prejudice remains as intense and widespread today as it was three or four decades ago. We do not have across-time data to make such a determination. More than likely, advancing education levels and the immigration of non-southerners into the region have worked to reduce racial animosity. But these forces alone, our data suggest, have not produced a "new South" that stands with the rest of the country in its racial attitudes.

Pinpointing the Prejudice

Is the prejudice we have identified concentrated among certain segments of the white population or is it widespread? There are good reasons to pose this question. To find, for example, that well educated white southerners express less prejudice than the poorly educated offers hope for the future, for average education levels in the South, like elsewhere, continue to rise. Conversely, if prejudice was concentrated, say, among a group who control the region's resources and institutions, concern rather than optimism might be the appropriate response.

To ascertain where prejudice is concentrated, if at all, we considered three demographic characteristics of the region's white population: age, gender, and education. We have already noted the relevance of the third, education. It is especially pertinent in the context of this study, for while many scholars (Sniderman, Brody, and Kuklinski 1984) see increased education as the most effective means by which to reduce intolerance, others (Jackman 1978, 1981; Jackman and Muha 1984) argue that the role of education has been exaggerated. When conversing with an interviewer, the highly educated, especially, refrain from "talking sincerely" because they know the socially correct answers. Consequently, according to this view, statistical analyses of survey data overestimate the relationship between education and prejudice.

Age has been the most prominent explanation of the supposed convergence of South and non-South attitudes about blacks. Firebaugh and Davis (1988) and Schuman and Bobo (1988) provide the strongest evidence. Using data in the General Social Surveys, the former show, first, that southern racial prejudice dropped precipitously between 1972 and 1984, and, second, that cohort replacement explains much of the decline. They use four items, separately and additively, to measure antiblack prejudice (p. 258): whether blacks are welcome for dinner, whether whites have a right to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods, whether blacks should not "push" themselves where they are not wanted, and whether there should be laws against black-white marriage. Schuman and Bobo incorporate an experimental design into their study and

find that age outdistances region as a correlate of support for an open-housing law. This relationship holds even when the source of enforcement—the local versus the federal government—is controlled. As we noted earlier, however, no one has delineated the process by which this supposed generational change occurred.

Researchers have given less attention to the effect of gender on racial attitudes, which becomes especially intriguing within the context of the South. On the one hand, men and women are equally exposed to what we identified as still high levels of prejudice. Moreover, they share jobs, households, and the like, with which comes frequent and sometimes intimate interaction. All of these imply congruent attitudes. On the other hand, historians have argued that southern racism has its deepest roots in white males' fears about and anger toward black men interacting with white women. To be sure, such arguments have been largely speculative. Yet they are a commonplace among specialists in southern history (Cash, 1941; Williamson 1984). If these speculations hold true, then the gender difference should be pronounced in the South: strong gut-reactions among men, less visceral reactions among women.

Adding the three independent variables to the original regression equation increases its complexity. Our model now takes the form

$$Y = A + BX + BX + BX + BX + BXX + BXX + BXX, \text{ where}$$

Y = number of items

X = condition (1 if black family, 0 if baseline)

X = age

X = gender

X = education

Of particular interest are the three interactions. A statistically significant (and positive) age by condition interaction, for example, indicates that older people express more anger toward the idea of a black family moving in next door than younger people do.

Table 3.1 reports the estimated coefficients. Three main effects reach statistical significance. Once again, and as expected, the average number of items in the treatment condition exceeds the average number in the baseline condition. In addition, women express anger toward more of the baseline items, on the whole, than men do.[6] Similarly, the less educated are more angry, overall, than the well educated. More important are the three interactions. Although in the right direction, the age x condition term does not reach statistical significance. Contrary to a widely-held view, we find weak evidence at best that prejudice increases with age among white southern adults. The story is much the same with respect to education: all else being equal, the poorly educated express the most and the well educated the least anger toward a black family moving in; but,

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6 We tested for ceiling effects but found none.

again, the interaction fails to reach statistical significance.

<div align="center">(table 3.1 about here)</div>

Prejudice is by far and away most strongly related to gender. Southern white men and women differ by a ratio of seven to one in their hostility toward black people. And it is men who express the markedly higher prejudice.

We must, of course, view this ratio with great caution. It is derived from a new methodology whose validity and reliability have not passed the test of time (see Kuklinski and Cobb 1997). A small sample of white southern adults is further divided into experimental conditions and demographic groupings. Also, the Race and Politics Study is designed as a representative sample of the nation, not a particular region. Ideally, our data would consist of a random sample of white southerners. All this said, we believe the gender difference to be real, although probably less than our estimate suggests. The association between gender and prejudice is too strong to be solely a function of the vagaries of sampling and unreliability. Moreover, we found nothing in the data—outliers, coding errors, etc.—to explain the relationship away.

But is it prejudice that we have identified? In their recent and provocative study, Nisbett and Cohen (1996) uncover a strong "culture of honor" among white southerners, especially men. The term "honor" refers, in this context, not to good character, but to one's "strength and power to enforce his will on others" (p. 4). White southern men, the authors show, do not always express more anger or a willingness to resort to violence than others; but when they believe that self-protection or social control is at stake, or when someone affronts them, they become dramatically more inclined toward anger and aggression than men elsewhere. Interestingly, the desire of southerners to convey sincerity, courtesy, and politeness, especially to outsiders, normally masks this readiness to strike out.

One plausible implication of the "culture of honor" thesis is that our measure of racial prejudice, anger over a black family moving in next door, captures white southern males' general hostility rather than their prejudice toward blacks. It is the words "make you angry," not the target group "black family" that provokes the negative response.

If males feel more anger generally, or are more inclined to respond angrily to others' actions, then their average score in the baseline condition should be higher than that of women. This is not the case. White southern women express the greater anger (mean of women = 2.12 versus mean of men = 1.76) toward the three items: government raising taxes, athletes receiving million dollar contracts, large corporations polluting the environment. These items were not designed to tap a general dimension of anger and hostility, and we cannot say unequivocally that they do. On the other hand, the unobtrusive nature of the methodology presumably encourages people to converse sincerely about their anger rather than speak insincerely to convey

a positive image to outsiders. While not a perfect measure of an overall predisposition toward anger and hostility, the three items probably approximate one.

But suppose responses to the baseline items do not accurately represent the level of general anger among southerners. Indeed, suppose that men harbor more anger than women. Would one then conclude that the "black family" item captures something other than racial prejudice? We think not.

Ideally, the Race and Politics Survey would include another treatment condition in which an otherwise equivalent nonracial item ("a family from Iowa moving in next door") replaces the racial item. We could then compare responses across the two conditions. Even in the absence of this comparison, though, it is highly unlikely that the "black family" measure is tapping more than intended. The reference to "a <u>single</u> black family" should not evoke a concern for self-protection; if it does, prejudice surely must underlie the response. Nor can the item be interpreted as an affront, which would be the case if it read, say, "blacks claiming that white southerners are prejudiced." In short, our race item has a tenuous and probably no link to the southern "culture of honor" as Nisbett and Cohen describe it.

Even though the data fall short of ideal, we have pushed this discussion to the limit. White men maintain a hegemonic hold on the region's institutions. They control most of the financial resources and render many of the decisions that affect people's lives. Although federal laws protect blacks from blatant racial discrimination, they fare less well at eliminating the subtle but still real effects of racial prejudice. A hidden racial animosity among those at the center of power, no matter how widespread, is a compelling reason for concern.

Another Look

The Survey Research Center at the University of California-Berkeley included the same methodology in its 1994 Multi-investigator Survey.[7] Three differences between the 1991 and 1994 measures warrant mention. First, whereas the original study used three items in the baseline condition and four in the test condition, the 1994 study used four and five, respectively. The additional baseline statement is: "requiring seatbelts be used when driving." Otherwise the wording of the items is identical. Second, the 1994 study included a second (randomly assigned) treatment group in which "interracial dating with black teenagers taking out white teenagers"[8] replaces the "black family" item. The latter survey, in other words, includes two measures of racial prejudice. Finally, the 1994 survey directly asked some respondents to indicate whether interracial dating and a black family moving in next door make them angry. The direct questions match the other racial items in wording.

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7 Paul Sniderman, Thomas Piazza, and Henry Brady are the principal investigators.

Before turning to a summary of the results, we feel compelled to redouble our earlier cautions about the small number of respondents. In some instances, estimates are derived from fewer than 30 people; no condition contains more than 60. Applying a new and untried methodology to such small numbers is a risky venture at best. Even if the methodology were not new, the small numbers preclude making any confident claims about the representativeness of those individuals included in our analyses. We cannot say unequivocally that they represent all white southerners in their attitudes; we doubt that they do. Compounding an already difficult problem, the small number of cases increases the probability that perfect randomness was not achieved when assigning people to one or another of the conditions. If this is the case, and we will show that it is, then the differences in demographic characteristics can influence the estimated levels of prejudice.

We face yet another problem: changing the number of items in the baseline and treatment conditions across studies introduces a potential confound whose effects we cannot determine. Especially troubling is the possibility that people cannot keep five items in short-term memory, which the 1994 study asks them to do in the two treatment (i.e., race-item-included) conditions. If they are unable to remember all five, respondents in these conditions likely will underreport the number of relevant items, which in turn will attenuate the estimated levels of prejudice.

Why, given this formidable list of concerns, even report the estimated results? This is a question we ourselves long pondered, and for which we offer two answers. First, the estimates derived from the new methodology, even if unstable and possibly biased, can be compared to the answers respondents gave to the direct questions. This comparison, as we will see, shows that respondents' "talking sincerely" cannot be taken for granted. Second, we can learn some additional lessons about the methodology itself.

The equations for "black family" and "interracial dating" are, respectively,

2.10 + .24 (Condition)   and   2.10 + .62 (Condition)

(.15) (.20)   (.14) (.19)

where condition again is a dummy variable accounting for the difference between the baseline and relevant treatment condition.

The level of estimated anger toward the "black family" item (24%) falls short of that found earlier (42%). Indeed, the regression coefficient does not approach statistical significance, which immediately raises questions about the methodology's reliability. In a series of exploratory studies (Kuklinski and Cobb 1997), we have found that unreliability becomes a problem when the cell n's fall under 75, which is true here. Additionally, the distributions of gender, which we found earlier to be a strong predictor of prejudice, vary

8 Ideally, the item would have been written, "interracial dating among black and white teenagers."

across the three conditions. Women are most highly concentrated in the black family condition (63%), less concentrated in the baseline condition (58%), and least concentrated in the interracial dating condition (48%). In light of our earlier results that women hold less racial animosity than men, these distributions imply that the black family item will underestimate the level of prejudice and the interracial dating item will overestimate it.

And indeed, an estimated 63 percent of white southerners say they become angry at the thought of interracial dating among teenagers. This highly significant figure is astounding, and comports with the results of other studies (Kuklinski and Cobb 1997) that consistently generate higher estimates with the interracial dating item than with the black family item. But, again, these data must be interpreted with great caution. In this case, the markedly higher proportion of (older)[9] men could bias the estimate in an upward direction.

Let us summarize and try to interpret what we have uncovered thus far. The 1991 data reveal that 42 percent of white southerners express anger at a black family moving in next door. A replication of this study, based on a smaller number of cases and a revised methodology that includes more items, provides a lower estimate that does not reach statistical significance. Finally, the 1994 data also indicate that more than 60 percent of white southerners included in the study react negatively to interracial dating among teenagers. The 1994 estimates, we noted, are more problematic both because of the smaller number of cases within the conditions and the lack of completely random assignment of respondents to these conditions.

All in all, we deem our original portrayal of white southern prejudice to be near the mark. If there is one estimate in the first study that warrants skepticism, it is the gender difference. Not that the substantive conclusion is wrong; but it would be prudent to assume we have overestimated the magnitude of the gap. That the 1994 replication does not produce similar results is, frankly, disappointing. We do not know why the coefficient falls so far short of statistical significance. On the other hand, the estimate of anger toward interracial dating appears solid. We repeated the analysis three different times, each time randomly removing older men so that the demographic distributions in the treatment condition mirrored those in the baseline condition. Of course, this elimination lowers the cell size even more. Yet, in all three instances the estimate remained above 50% and was highly significant.

There is yet another way to put these findings into perspective: examine the responses people give when conversing directly with the interviewer. When asked to say directly if a black family moving in next door would anger them, only seven percent answer in the affirmative; this figure is significantly lower than the estimates provided by the indirect measure.

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9 The interracial dating condition contains proportionately more men and more people born before 1960.

Interracial dating is more complex. Nearly 40 percent, when asked directly, say interracial dating angers them. This figure is surprising; indeed we do not know another publicly reported percentage that approaches it. What is going on here? Do direct measures work well after all?

First, we must remember that the very small numbers of cases precludes any confident statement about the nature of white southerners' attitudes. We are not in a position to generalize. More significantly, the wording of the question, "black teenagers taking out white teenagers," conjures an image of black teenage men taking out white teenage women. It apparently evokes an unusual level of anger. We are not suggesting that this wording is not a good measure of racial prejudice; to the contrary, it might be the most valuable measure yet used. In any case, it produces numbers that direct measures heretofore have not produced in modern times.

As revealing as this direct measure might be, note that our alternative measure estimates an even higher percentage—63—who express anger at the idea of interracial dating. Even on an item that apparently incenses many people to say what they really think, an additional 25 percent refrain. The difference between the two estimates is worth knowing.

Clearly, some white southerners will publicly express their hostility toward blacks, especially on matters involving close interpersonal relations.[10] Far more critically, it appears that many others, when involved in a fully open conversation with the interviewer, choose to "talk" rather than "talk sincerely." And so they tell a story they think the interviewer wants to hear.[11]

Methodologically, the preceding exercises demonstrate that proper random assignment of respondents to conditions is crucial to the technique's success. Variation in the distributions of relevant characteristics across conditions can skew the estimates. The larger the number of respondents, of course, the more likely that this problem will not be severe. In any event, we urge researchers who use the methodology to compare the distributions well before undertaking an analysis. Randomness cannot be taken for granted. That the methodology we used here identified markedly higher levels of prejudice than the direct questions raises concerns about the validity of the latter. On the other hand, we readily admit the need to conduct more research into the reliability of our own technique. The journey to a near-perfect measure of racial prejudice is far from over.

Final Comments

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10 More than likely, people see reacting negatively to interracial dating as more legitimate than reacting to a black family moving in. Thus the perceived costs of talking sincerely should be less.

11 We are not implying that direct questions about race have no value. Although they might underestimate the overall level of prejudice, much of the evidence indicates that they still work when analyzing relationships.

Surveys provide most of what we know about racial attitudes. And we know a lot. Some of the most visible works in political science (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears and Kinder 1981; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985) analyze survey data on race. We began with the premise that interviews function as conversations between interviewer and interviewee. Just as people do in their daily lives, interviewees consciously or unconsciously ask themselves whether the other person involved in the conversation is "one of us."[12] Does the interviewer share our views of the world? If the answer is "no," then interviewees choose between "talk sincerely," "do not talk sincerely," or "do not talk at all." If respondents perceive the costs of "talking sincerely" to be high, they likely will not choose that option.

The methodology we developed to encourage sincere conversation is by no means a panacea for the study of racial attitudes. We have devoted considerable space to the problems that accompany it, at least as it has been used to date. On the other hand, more than any other approach we know, ours provides the opportunity for respondents to speak their minds. When given this opportunity, they apparently do.

We chose to talk with white southerners. Both the region's legacy and conflicting evidence about white southerners' true attitudes toward black people served as motivations. So did our conclusion that no one had proffered a compelling reason why a tidal wave of attitudinal change should have occurred. What would compel white southerners to change their attitudes just when the national government and people from "the north" intruded into their affairs?

We have not argued that change has been nonexistent in the South. Forty years ago most southern whites spoke openly and unhesitatingly about their prejudice. Today, most do not. Whether that itself represents progress is, of course, debatable; that it represents a departure from the past is not. More significantly, many white southerners today do not express racial animosity, even when given the chance to say what they really think. Indeed, it would be a grave injustice to those living in the South ever to lose sight

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The stereotype measures, for example, relate as expected to a set of policy preferences.

12 Race-of-interviewer effects represent one instance of people asking whether they and the interviewer are "one." Students of survey research have found these effects to be pervasive. In an early study, Hatchett and Schuman (1976) found that whites give more pro-black responses to black than to white interviewers. Several years later, Groves and Kahn (1979) compared face-to-face with over-the-telephone responses on attitudes toward integration. Thirteen percent more southern respondents favored an all white neighborhood and 11 percent fewer favored a mixed neighborhood when a fellow southerner conducted a face-to-face interview than when a non-southerner anonymously completed the interview over the telephone. This pattern did not exist among non-southerners. More recently, Anderson, Silver, and Abramson (1988a, b) showed that black respondents report more favorable attitudes toward whites to white interviewers than to black ones (see also Kinder and Sanders 1986). And finally, Finkel, Guterbock, and Borg (1991) used statewide poll data to estimate that white respondents were 8-11 percent more likely to express support for Douglas Wilder, a black candidate for governor, when a black conducted the interview.

of this fact.

But sizeable numbers of white southerners say they continue to hold animosity toward blacks. Many get angry at the idea of a black family moving in next door; even more react negatively to interracial dating among teenagers. As best we can ascertain, the percentages reach their peak among white southern men, the group who maintain most of the economic and political power in the region.

We wish not to indict anyone. But these findings underline more than ever the need to construct new survey techniques that facilitate sincere conversation. Until we do, we must choose between anecdotes, such as Wirt's, that provide a true but possibly unrepresentative portrayal and survey items that provide a representative but possibly not all together true portrayal. Getting the best of both worlds is a worthwhile goal.

Chapter 3 References

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Figure 3.1

Schematic for Whether Respondents Talk with the Interviewer

Does Respondent Perceive Shared Views?

Yes

No

Converse Openly

Are Costs Associated With Conversing Openly?

Yes

No

Refuse to Converse

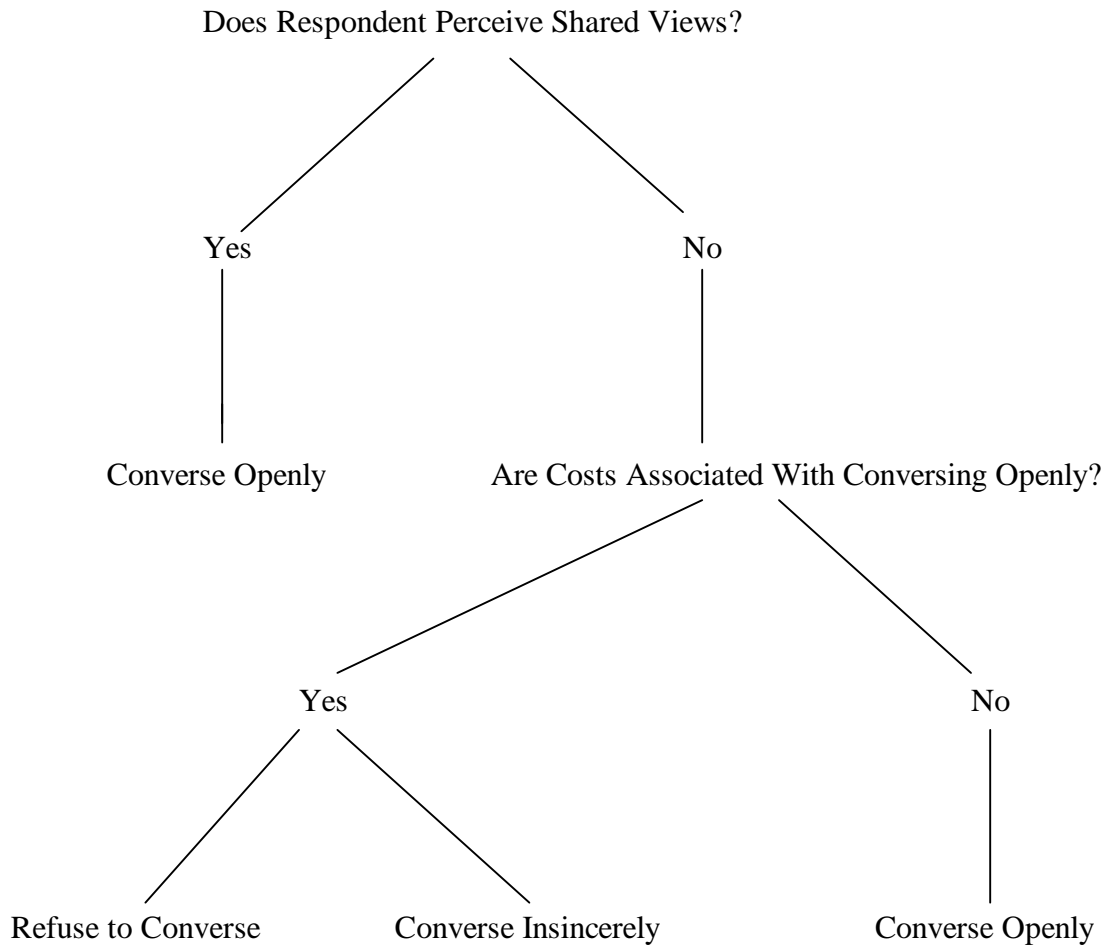Converse Insincerely

Converse Openly

Table 3.1

Unobtrusive Estimate of Southern Whites= Anger Over a Black Family=s Moving In, by Age, Education, and Gender.

Variable	Coefficient	Coding
Condition	1.34***	Baseline = 0;
	(.39)	Test Condition = 1
Age	.02	Born Before 1960 = 0;
	(.19)	Born in or After 1960 = 1
Education	(-.26)*	No College = 0;
	(.15)	Attended College = 1
Gender	(.33)**	Males = 0;
	(.15)	Females = 1
Condition X Age	(.21)	
	(.24)	
Condition X Education	(-.15)	
	(.22)	
Condition X Gender	(-.70)***	
	(.21)	

Source: 1991 Race and Politics Survey

Note: n = 285; ***p<.01; **p<.05; *p<.10