Racial Attitudes and the "New South"

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ARTICLES

Racial Attitudes and the "New South"

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An abundance of survey research conducted over the past two decades has portrayed a "new South" in which the region's white residents now resemble the remainder of the country in their racial attitudes. No longer is the South the bastion of racial prejudice. Using a new and relatively unobtrusive measure of racial attitudes designed to overcome possible social desirability effects, our study finds racial prejudice to be still high in the South and markedly higher in the South than the non-South. Preliminary evidence also indicates that this prejudice is concentrated among white southern men. Comparison of these results with responses to traditional survey questions suggests that social desirability contaminates the latter. This finding helps to explain why the "new South" thesis has gained currency.

If two factors have historically differentiated the South from the rest of the country, they are the scope and the tenacity of racial beliefs and attitudes. Born into a culture characterized by rigidity and extreme traditionalism, southerners for more than one hundred years opposed any form of integration. As U. B. Phillips bluntly put it in 1928, the "cardinal test of a southerner" is the conviction that the South "shall be and remain a white man's country" (quoted in Black and Black 1987, 196).

By many popular and academic accounts, a "new South" emerged during the late 1970s and 1980s. Unlike the South of old, this transformed region of the nation holds no distinction as the bastion of racism in American life. Quite the contrary: Because racial bigotry has declined dramatically among the people whose very culture and tradition were founded on a belief in the inferiority of black people, antiblack prejudice among southern whites now closely mirrors that found among nonsoutherners. Others question this widely accepted conclusion, however, pointing to the white South's transformation from a Democratic to a

Republican stronghold. Moreover, southern states rarely send an African American to Congress; when districts are reconfigured to favor their election, whites resist the redistricting. These phenomena, skeptics argue, constitute parts of a whole: a widespread and continuing racial animosity among white southerners.

White southerners' racial attitudes have profound and serious implications not only for the region itself but also for national politics and policy making. Take the region's dramatic shift in allegiance to the Republican party (Carmines and Stanley 1990; Stanley 1988). If Black and Black's conclusion (1992, 344) that "as the united South goes (in presidential elections), so goes the nation" is correct, then this emergence of Republicanism is one of the most important political phenomena in recent history. It means that this region, with its strategically timed Super Tuesday primary, has an almost virtual lock on limiting the kinds of presidential candidates either party slates, as well as a disproportionate influence on what the winning candidate will—and will not—do when he takes office. Add to this a Congress in which southern Republicans hold considerable influence, and it is reasonable to conclude that southern racial attitudes will be a major impetus in national politics for years to come.

But what, precisely, is the nature of those attitudes? Validly measuring racial attitudes is one of the most difficult tasks that social scientists face. As long as people know they are being asked to express their beliefs and feelings about race, the investigator cannot dismiss the possibility of desirability effects—people giving an insincere, "right" answer.[1] Moreover, it is the highly prejudiced who have the most to hide in a society that purports no longer to tolerate racial animosity and discrimination. If social desirability operates anywhere, it should be among the very group whose attitudes social scientists most want to identify.

In the study reported below, we introduce an unobtrusive survey method to ascertain what white southerners think about blacks. The two questions we seek to answer are: (1) Is there truly a "new South," or just a South whose residents have been able to convey that impression? (2) To the extent that racial prejudice exists among southern whites, is it widespread or concentrated among one or more identifiable segments of southern society?

RACE AND THE CONTEMPORARY SOUTH

In a footnote to their article on changes in prejudice in the South and non-South, Firebaugh and Davis (1988, 251) note that their research was "inspired

[1] Experimenters have conducted some very imaginative studies of social desirability. In some laboratory experiments, they led subjects to believe that their responses were being monitored physiologically. These subjects gave more negative evaluations of blacks than did control subjects who believed they were not being physiologically monitored (Sigall and Page 1971; Tetlock and Manstead 1985). Studies of helping behavior show that whites are less inclined to help African Americans when they are acting anonymously than when they know others are watching them (see Crosby, Bromley, and Saxe 1980 for a thorough review). Finally, Gaertner and Dovidio (1981) and Katz, Wackerhut, and Hass (1986) have independently offered compelling evidence that racists' concern for impression management conditions the responses they give to directly posed questions about their racial attitudes.

by the insistence of white southerners in one of our classes that 'Things are not
like that anymore; we [young southerners] are no more racially prejudiced than
are northerners.' " Their next sentence reads: "The results on the whole should
please those students." Indeed they should. Using data in the 1972, 1976, 1980,
and 1984 General Social Surveys, Firebaugh and Davis present strong evidence
that racial prejudice declined more rapidly in the South than in the North during
this period. Two factors, intracohort attitude change and, especially, cohort re-
placement, are given to explain this precipitous drop. To be sure, the authors are
quick to point out, southerners continue to exhibit higher levels of racial prej-
udice, but the gap is no longer startling. Young white southerners look more like
their nonsouthern counterparts than their parents did; and the older generations
themselves have become more willing to acknowledge the rights of black people.

   Other authors have similarly concluded that the gap is narrowing and that
region no longer serves as the best predictor of racial attitudes (Greeley and
Sheatsley 1974; Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985; Smith 1981a, 1981b; Tuch
1987). Schuman and Bobo (1988) present especially compelling evidence. Incor-
porating experiments into their survey of white attitudes toward residential in-
tegration, the authors find that age outdistances region as a correlate of prejudice.
Not that region is found to be insignificant; it is not, but its relative impact on
racial prejudice falls short of that found in days gone by. Reed, who has studied
southern culture and attitudes for more than 30 years, similarly concludes (1993,
114–115) that "all in all, the differences in racial attitudes between white south-
erners and other white Americans are now differences only of degree, and of
relatively small degree at that."

   A few survey studies reach contrary conclusions. When asked, in 1976,
whether they "would personally prefer to live in a neighborhood that is all white,
mostly white, about half white and half black, or mostly black," a large majority
of white southerners admitted to preferring an entirely white neighborhood
(Black and Black 1987, 204). Since the data are 20 years old, the obvious coun-
terargument is that these attitudes reflect the "old South," not the "new South"
that has emerged in the past 15 years. In a well-publicized *Scientific American*
article, however, Taylor, Sheatsley, and Greeley (1978) observe South/non-South
convergence between 1970 and 1972, but not between 1972 and 1976. More
recently, Steeh and Schuman (1992) employ cohort analysis, starting with those
coming of age in 1959, to examine the convergence thesis. They find little evi-
dence of regional convergence during the 1980s. On only 2 of 12 racial items did
southern whites become racially liberal at a faster pace than nonsouthern whites;
on others, residents of the two regions actually diverged, with southern whites
becoming more conservative. On most items there was neither convergence nor
divergence.

   In short, the preponderance of survey evidence supports the "new South"
thesis. Younger generations of southerners, especially those born after the civil
rights movement of the 1960s, now hold attitudes nearly identical to those of
their nonsouthern counterparts. Even their parents and grandparents, once the

carriers of the banner of prejudice, no longer harbor an intense animosity toward blacks.

These same survey data are also consistent with the social desirability hypothesis, however. If social desirability contaminates the measurement of racial attitudes, we would not expect past research based on traditional survey questions to produce much counter-evidence to the convergence thesis.

Studies of actual voting behavior fuel the doubt. Carmines and Stimson (1989) and Huckfeldt and Kohfeld (1989) document the steady withdrawal of southerners from the Democratic party during the past three decades. Not coincidentally, this withdrawal began in 1964, when party officials actively mobilized and brought blacks into the fold. And, also not coincidentally, it was during the 1964 presidential campaign that Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater alienated blacks with his implicitly racial comments. Over time, an unraveling process occurred; as more and more blacks entered the Democratic coalition, more and more white southerners left it. In an especially revealing presentation, Huckfeldt and Kohfeld (1989) trace the actual voting patterns, by precinct, of whites and blacks in 24 southern cities between 1952 and 1972. The two trends are nearly mirror images: black support of the Democratic presidential candidate jumps dramatically after 1964 while white support plummets to less than 20% of the two-party vote. Huckfeldt and Kohfeld (1989, 84) conclude that "two party politics structured along class lines was emerging in southern urban areas at the beginning of the 1950s. But the full emergence of class based politics was aborted by the mobilization of the black population. Quite simply, the Democratic party was not big enough to accommodate both blacks and [southern] whites." The substitution of racial politics for class politics, they demonstrate further, had continued well into the 1980s.

Actual votes are compelling evidence, but this evidence has itself come under attack. Using the 1980 and 1988 National Election Studies, Abramowitz (1994) challenges Carmines and Stimson's thesis. He concludes that the Democratic party's stance on social welfare and national security, not its position on race, drove southerners and nonsoutherners alike out of the Democratic party.[2] Indeed, he finds that the expected partisan polarization on racial issues does not exist; Democrats are almost as racially conservative as Republicans. Like many before him, Abramowitz has no choice but to use traditional measures of racial attitudes in his analysis and thus cannot reject an alternative, social desirability hypothesis: Democrats-turned-Republican do not reveal their true feelings about blacks, which in turn attenuates the attitudinal differences between the two parties' members.

[2] Giles and Hertz (1994, 324) use voter registration data collected in Louisiana parishes to show that "general forces outside of the parish context were at work in stimulating growth in Republican and Independent registration." They also find that racial threat, defined as the concentration of blacks in a parish, affects white registration, and they conclude with the warning that "registration data provide a conservative test of the threat hypothesis and may well underestimate the effects of racial concentration" (324).

In every survey study that we have reviewed here, including those that incorporate experimental designs, the questions require people to express their racial attitudes directly. Imagine a respondent who holds antiblack attitudes and also recognizes contemporary norms. Faced with admitting these attitudes to an unknown interviewer (who surely must hold liberal racial attitudes), why not simply avoid the pain of embarrassment and give the "right" answer? As a form of impression management, nothing could be easier. To traditional studies of racial attitudes, nothing could be potentially more damaging.

We know only one way to overcome this problem: eliminate the respondent's motivation to convey a false impression during the interview. This requires a new approach to the measurement of racial attitudes.

MEASURING RACIAL ATTITUDES UNOBTRUSIVELY: THE LIST EXPERIMENT

Social psychologists have exercised a high degree of ingenuity to reduce, if not eliminate, the effects of social desirability. Broadly, they have deployed two kinds of strategies: coercion and unobtrusive measurement. The basic idea of a coercive strategy is to persuade a respondent that any deception on his or her part will be punished, if only by exposure. The procedures, necessarily experimental, require considerable control over the behavior of both the person being observed and the person undertaking the observation, not to mention the use of technical paraphernalia such as bogus lie detectors (Crosby, Bromley, and Saxe 1980; Tetlock and Manstead 1985). On the other hand, the basic idea of an unobtrusive strategy is to persuade respondents that they can express hostility toward blacks without anyone's being aware that they have done so. Although this simple idea has proved difficult to put into practice (Gaertner and Dovidio 1981, 1986), the balance of practical advantages plainly favors the unobtrusive strategy in a voluntary telephone interview.

We offer as our version of an unobtrusive measure the list experiment. Imagine a representative sample of a general population divided randomly in two. One half are 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 other half receive the same list plus an additional item about race and are also asked to indicate the number of items that make them angry. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that a respondent in the second half takes exception to two of the items, one of which is the race item. It will seem impossible to the respondent 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 whether the race item angered the respondent. As we demonstrate below, however, a data analyst can use these answers to estimate the level of anger in the population as a whole and in strategic subsets of it.

The baseline condition of the list experiment included in the 1991 Race and Politics Survey begins as follows (see Sniderman, Tetlock, and Piazza 1992 for a description):

> Now I am going to read you three things that sometimes make people angry or upset. After I
> read all three, just tell me HOW MANY of them upset you. I don't want to know which ones,
> just HOW MANY.

With these ground rules established, the interviewer then reads a list of three
items:

> (1) the federal government increasing the tax on gasoline;
> (2) professional athletes getting million-dollar contracts;
> (3) large corporations polluting the environment.[3]

Some randomly assigned respondents receive the baseline version. Others, in
the test condition, receive the three baseline items plus a fourth, in this case "a
black family moving in next door."

The logic of the analysis is to compare the average number of items named in
the test condition, with its maximum of four, to the average in the baseline
condition, with its maximum of three. More precisely, subtracting the baseline
from the experimental mean and multiplying by 100 provides an estimate of the
level of anger directed toward the race item.[4]

Suppose, for example, that the estimated means in the baseline and test con-
dition are 2.0 and 2.5, respectively. Because there is only one additional item in
the test condition, the only way that the 0.5 increase can occur is for half of the
treatment group to express anger at the race item. Multiplying 0.5 by 100 gives
the right estimate, 50%. All of this presupposes, of course, the proper random
assignment of individuals to the various treatment groups.

This antiseptic description of the list methodology, it must be acknowledged,
belies numerous complexities that do not afflict traditional survey methods, one
of which will be examined herein. Kuklinski and Cobb (1996) provide a detailed
analysis of the issues and problems, including those that have not yet been fully
resolved.

A "NEW SOUTH"?

If the issue is outright discrimination, there can be no doubt that the South
of today does not resemble the South of yesterday; federal laws guarantee that
(Wirt n.d.). But even in the presence of legal safeguards, widespread racial prej-
udice among a white majority that still holds the reigns of power can slow the
assimilation of black people, dilute their political power, and preclude their ec-
onomic advancement.

[3] When choosing the nonracial items, we made every effort to avoid contrast effects. Suppose, for
example, that one of the items had read, "Someone raped your best female friend." This thought is
so repugnant to most people that any other item would sound tame in comparison. Pilot studies
showed the three items to be comparable in their propensities to provoke anger.

[4] We use analysis of variance models to test the statistical significance of the relationships reported
below. These significance tests appear in the tables and figures.

TABLE 1

ESTIMATED MEAN LEVEL OF ANGER OVER A BLACK FAMILY MOVING IN
NEXT DOOR, BY REGION (WHITES ONLY)

Condition	Non-South	South
Baseline	2.28	1.95
	(.77)	(.80)
	$n = 425$	$n = 139$
Black family	2.24	2.37
	(.95)	(1.0)
	$n = 461$	$n = 136$
Estimated % angry	0	42***

Note: Entries are means; standard deviations are in parentheses.
***$p < .001$ for regional difference in estimated percent angry (one-tailed test).

Table 1 reports the mean number of angry responses in the *Baseline* and *Black Family* conditions for the *South* and *Non-South*.[5] Taking nonsoutherners first, the two means point to an obvious problem: the *Baseline* mean exceeds, even if only negligibly, the test mean.[6] Taken literally, these figures say that nonsoutherners do not express anger at the idea of a black family moving in. This obviously wrong result is attributable to a ceiling effect. The *Baseline* mean, 2.24, indicates that many people identified all three baseline items as anger-provoking.[7] Given the random assignment of respondents to the two conditions, we assume that the three nonracial items angered an equal number of people in the treatment condition. If these individuals additionally identified the race item, their sincere answer would be four items, or all of them. Of course, this situation negates the very purpose of the list experiment; it is no longer unobtrusive when all items in the treatment condition are selected.

Consequently, we utilized an alternative methodology, detailed elsewhere (Kuklinski et al. n.d.),[8] to estimate the percentage of nonsoutherners who are angered by the racial item. The estimate obtained from this procedure is that one in every ten whites in the non-South expresses anger about a black family's moving in. Although this estimate might seem low, its enormity should not be

[5] The South includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia. It is not self-evident why the baseline mean is higher in the non-South.

[6] Because the baseline and test conditions are independent samples, the test condition mean can be marginally smaller than the baseline mean when the test item evokes little or no anger.

[7] That a ceiling effect exists here underlines the need for thorough and systematic pretesting. We conducted several pretests and yet, obviously, did not eliminate the problem.

[8] Barbara Mellers, a psychologist at Ohio State University, developed the iterative procedure.

lost; 10% translates into millions of nonsouthern whites for whom the very thought of living near a black family evokes strong negative feelings.

In light of this latter point, the estimate for the South is striking if not dramatic. Some 42% of whites living in the region, four times as many as in the remainder of the country, express anger at the thought of a black family moving in next door. Merely asking about the integration of a single black family elicits a strong reaction from nearly half of the South's white adult population.

Much has been made of the South's transformation. Whatever shapes it might have taken, a precipitous decline in racial prejudice does not appear to be one of them. Through the lens of the list experiment, the trumpeting of a "new South" whose racial attitudes now resemble those found elsewhere looks to be premature (also see Black and Black 1987).

PREJUDICE, AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, AND THE SOUTH

The list experiment includes a second test condition, in which "black leaders asking for affirmative action" replaces "a black family moving in next door" (we will have more to say about both race items later). This item was not designed to be a direct measure of racial prejudice and should not be construed as such. It nonetheless affords an alternative and complementary glimpse into the nature of southern whites' racial attitudes.

Table 2 reports, by region, the estimated levels of anger toward the *Affirmative Action* item. Two patterns jump out. First, within each region many more people express anger toward black leaders asking for affirmative action than toward a black family moving in—98 versus 42% in the *South* and 42 versus 10% in the *Non-South*. These two intraregional differences suggest that more than prejudice is driving opposition to what has become a contentious and controversial policy (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). Second, and more relevant here, southerners express markedly more anger toward the *Affirmative Action* item than nonsoutherners. Indeed, just about all southern whites express anger at the thought of black leaders asking for affirmative action.[9]

[9] As part of their 1994 multi-investigator study, Martin Gilens, Tom Piazza, and Paul Sniderman replicated the list experiment. The 1994 experiment differs from the one reported here in two respects. First, the investigators used four rather than three baseline items and thus five test items. Second, they included two additional test conditions: "interracial dating, with black teenagers taking out white teenagers" and "awarding college scholarships on the basis of race." For the South, the n's are perilously small, ranging from 63 to 52 across the five conditions. Thus, the estimates are highly unstable. They indicate a discernibly lower level of anger among southerners on the affirmative action item than we report here. On the other hand, an estimated 93% of southerners express anger at the college scholarships item, compared to 49% of nonsoutherners. Almost 30% of the southern respondents, again a slightly lower figure than we found in the 1991 study, voice anger at the idea of a black family moving in. But some 63% of southerners (and 11% of nonsoutherners) become angry at the thought of interracial dating. These additional findings reveal, first, that the items are not perfectly reliable but, second, that over a series of items the overall conclusion remains intact. Racial animosity in the South markedly outdistances the level of prejudice in the non-South.

TABLE 2

ESTIMATED MEAN LEVEL OF ANGER OVER AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, BY
REGION (WHITES ONLY)

Condition	Non–South	South
Baseline	2.28	1.95
	(.77)	(.80)
	$n = 425$	$n = 139$
Affirmative Action	2.69	2.93
	(1.0)	(1.07)
	$n = 409$	$n = 141$
Estimated % angry	41	98***

Note: Entries are means; standard deviations are in parentheses.
***$p < .001$ for regional difference in estimated percent angry (one-tailed test).

Why should the proportion of supposedly nonprejudiced whites who express anger toward the *Affirmative Action* item be greater in the South than in the non–South? More concretely, assume that all prejudiced people, as identified by the *Black Family* item, intensely oppose affirmative action. This translates into 42% of southerners and 10% of nonsoutherners, the percentages we reported earlier. In the South, an additional 56% express anger at black leaders asking for affirmative action, whereas in the non–South an additional 32% do. What can we make of this 24% difference across the two regions? Why is anger toward affirmative action more widespread among supposedly nonprejudiced people in the South, the region in which we find out-and-out prejudice to run high?

The most ready explanation is that southerners more widely and deeply hold antigovernment feelings, and thus more fully resent affirmative action, an obvious government dictate.[10] For this explanation to hold, southerners should express markedly more hostility toward the national government as an institution, and the regional gap found on affirmative action should extend to nonracial policies.

Three questionnaire items tap general attitudes toward the national government. First, respondents indicated on an 11-point scale how favorably they felt toward the government. Second, they answered a question whether they thought "the government in Washington is trying to do too much." Third, they expressed their level of anger toward "government officials interfering and trying to tell us what we can and can't do with our own lives." None of these items is ideal; the best we can do is look for consistency in responses across the three items.

[10] Sniderman and Piazza (1993) argue that some of whites' resentment toward affirmative action comes from a sense that the program unfairly gives blacks preferential treatment. True as this might be, it cannot explain the regional differences. If southerners disproportionately attack affirmative action as unfair, we must ask why.

The distributions appear in Figures 1–3. As measured by the feeling thermometer, southerners and nonsoutherners express almost identical feelings toward the national government. The average for both regions is almost six, where the higher the number, the more warmly the respondent feels. Not surprisingly, what little regional difference exists does not approach statistical significance. Responses to the statement that "the government in Washington is trying to do too much" are open to interpretation. On the one hand, significantly more southerners—10% more—agree strongly with the statement. On the other, more non-southerners, 43% versus 36%, agree somewhat. If the issue is simply whether people agree or disagree with the statement, the regions look alike. If the issue is the intensity of the opposition to government, the South holds an edge (and for this reason the regional difference reaches statistical significance at $p < .05$). Finally, anger toward government interference is widespread and by no means concentrated in the South. Unfortunately, the statement itself—"government officials interfering and trying to tell us what we can and can't do with our own lives"—precludes the kind of discrimination we seek. We would expect few to disagree with such incendiary words; and few do.[11]

A more challenging test is to compare regional attitudes on a nonracial policy. The Race and Politics Survey includes a particularly useful item on seat belts. It reads: "In the interests of public safety, do you think the government should require the use of seat belts in automobiles, or do you think these decisions should be left up to the individual?" What makes this item so valuable is that it does not refer to a social or political group, nor can the target, seat belts, be associated with one. Other than seat belts, the only referent is "the government." And the question explicitly pits government against the individual.

Figure 4 displays the results. There is little discernible difference across the two regions, with a sizable majority in both—67% in the South and 62 in the non-South—supporting a government requirement that people use seat belts. An ANOVA confirms the lack of a significant relationship (Figure 4).

All in all, then, the available evidence does not reveal significantly more anti-government sentiment among the southerners in our sample. To be sure, southerners express the greater antipathy when differences exist. But the central story is the similarity of attitudes across the regions. So, if differences in perspective on government cannot explain the patterns of racial attitudes, what can? Lacking an empirically grounded answer, we can only offer a reasoned speculation.

An important body of social psychological research documents an ambivalence toward blacks among many whites (Dovidio and Gaertner 1991, 1993; Gaertner and Dovidio 1981, 1986; Katz, Wackerhut, and Hass 1986). Even among people who sincerely deem themselves unprejudiced, this ambivalence can lead to the (often unconscious) acceptance of external negative cues about blacks, especially

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[11] That the relationship is significant at $p < .01$ stems from the tendency of southerners to be slightly more clustered at the very high end of the scale.

FIGURE 1

FEELINGS TOWARD THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, BY REGION
(WHITES ONLY)
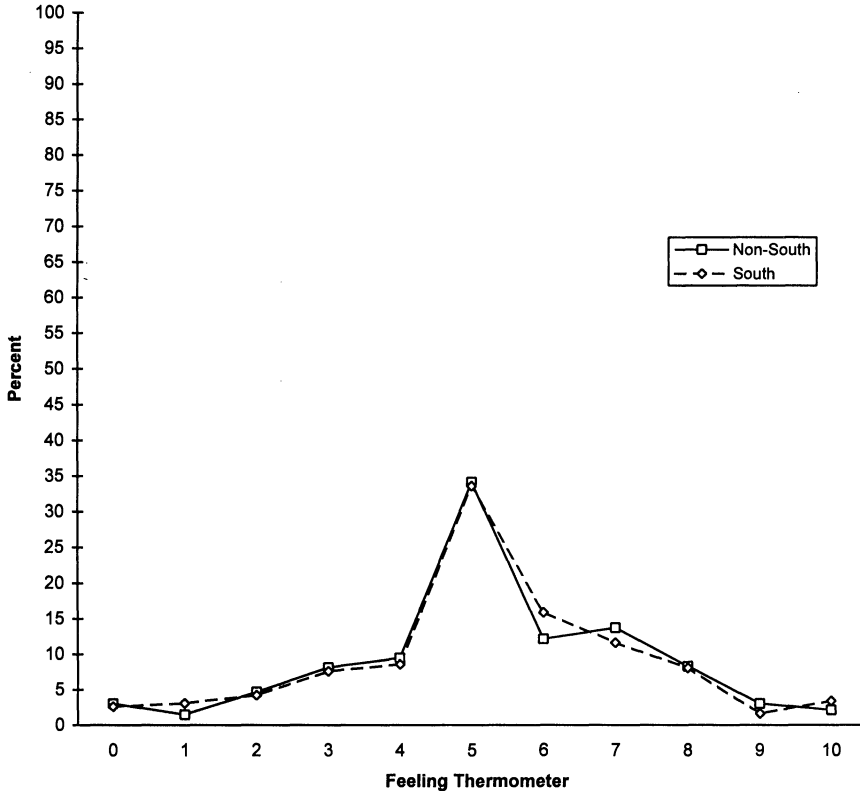
Note: Difference in regional response is n.s.; $p > .85$ (one-tailed test).
$n = 1,296$, nonsouthern respondents; $n = 415$, southern respondents.

when the cues themselves are widespread. Manifestly unprejudiced people who nonetheless feel some ambivalence and live in a region where racial animosity runs deep probably will not consciously censor (Devine 1989; Devine and Monteith 1993) all their latent feelings toward blacks. Because it has a legitimacy that overt prejudice does not, anger toward affirmative action can be one source of expression of those latent feelings.

We must emphasize two points here. First, surveys cannot unravel the mental process just described. At best, we offer our speculation as a working hypothesis. Second, we are *not* arguing that anger toward affirmative action on its face rep-

FIGURE 2

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON TRYING TO DO
TOO MUCH, BY REGION
(WHITES ONLY)
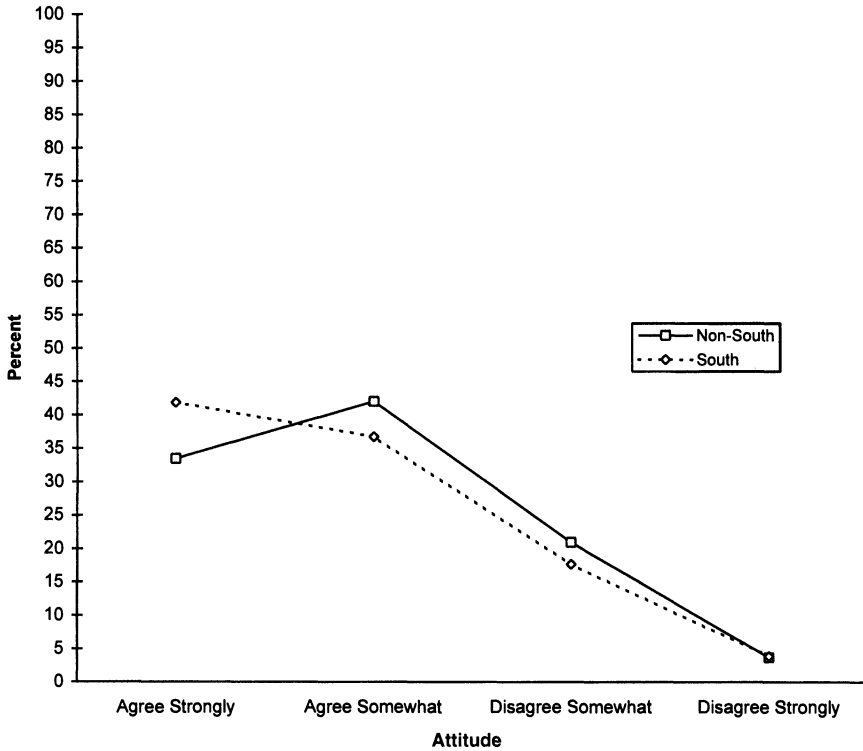
Note: Difference in regional response is significant at $p < .05$ (one-tailed test).
$n = 1,286$, nonsouthern respondents; $n = 411$, southern respondents.

resents racial prejudice; people can strongly oppose affirmative action because they believe it unfair or exclusionary (Sniderman and Piazza 1993). What we have proposed is much more limited: anger toward affirmative action *can* represent latent prejudice and most likely will do so in a strongly antiblack environment.

A MATTER OF DEMOGRAPHICS?

So far our discussion has implicitly assumed that the higher level of prejudice among white southerners results from something uniquely "southern," what

FIGURE 3

ATTITUDE TOWARD FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION, BY REGION
(WHITES ONLY)

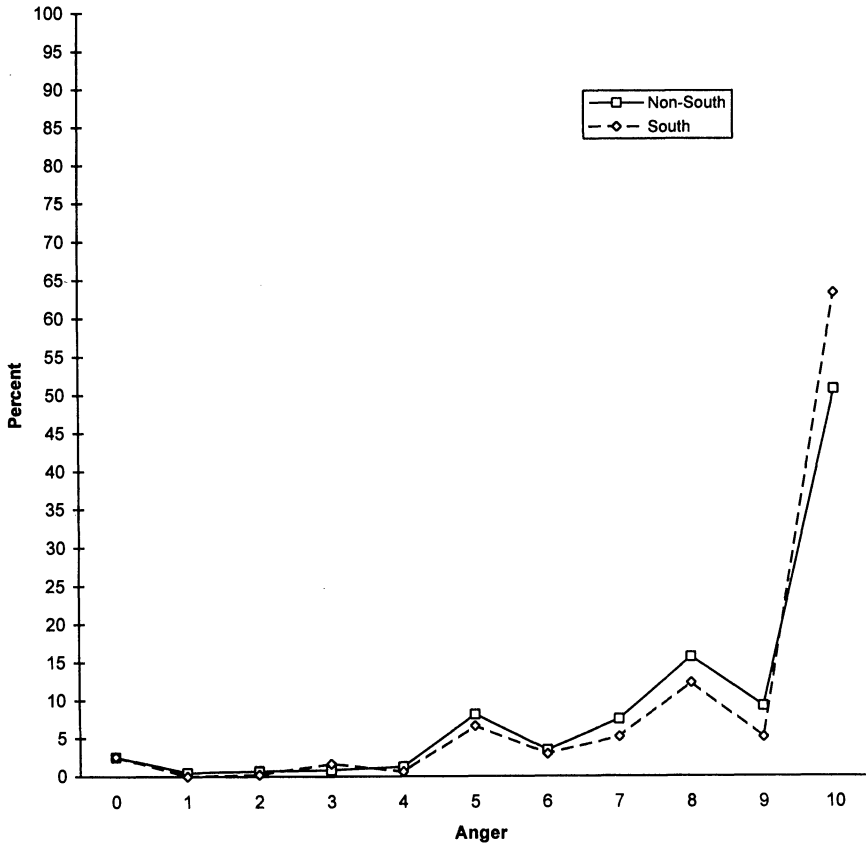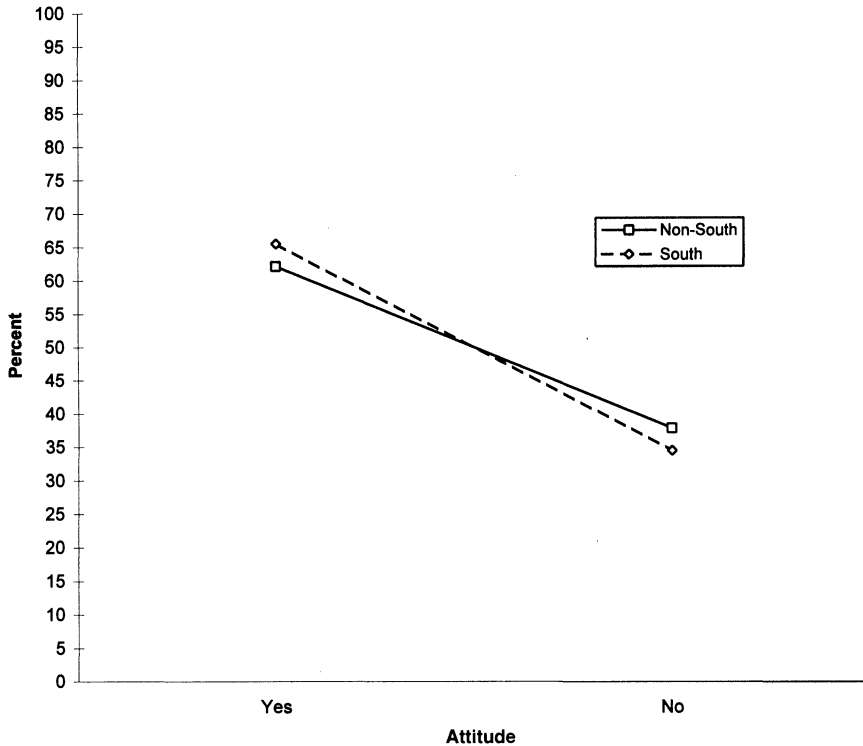*Note:* Difference in regional response is significant at $p < .01$ (one-tailed test).
$n = 1,298$, nonsouthern respondents; $n = 415$, southern respondents.

many would call southern culture. This assumption could be wrong. If white southerners were older, poorer, less educated, and the like—characteristics normally associated with greater prejudice—then demographics would explain the regional difference in racial attitudes, leaving culture as little more than a small and relatively insignificant residual.

Table 3 reports the distributions on four selected demographics—*Age, Gender, Income,* and *Education.* What is striking are the similarities, not the differences, in the distributions. On any one of them, our sample of white southerners looks

FIGURE 4

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT REQUIRING THE USE OF
SEATBELTS, BY REGION
(WHITES ONLY)

Note: Difference in regional response is n.s.; $p > .20$ (one-tailed test).
$n = 1,303$, nonsouthern respondents; $n = 414$, southern respondents.

much like the remaining sample of whites. This is not true with respect to
two political variables—*Ideology* and *Partisan Identification*. Discernibly more
southerners describe themselves as conservative and Republican. It is not self-
evident, however, which comes first, the prejudice or the partisan and ideological
attachments (see, for example, Huckfeldt and Kohfeld 1989). Thus, it would be
imprudent to undertake a regression analysis in which the latter are used to
predict the former.

Demographics cannot explain the interregional variation in racial prejudice
that we uncovered earlier. Call it culture; call it climate; call it environment: the
label does not matter. The widespread racial prejudice in the South is a uniquely

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES, BY REGION (WHITES ONLY)

Variable	Non-South	South
Gender		
Male	48.1%	48%
Female	51.9	52
	$n = 1,312$	$n = 419$
Education		
<High school	12.9	17.2
High school	46.5	43.1
Some college	19.2	17.5
College graduate	12.8	15.6
>College	8.6	6.6
	$n = 1,294$	$n = 414$
Age		
18–30	26	25.7
31–40	21.5	25.2
41–50	17.6	15.3
>51	34.9	33.8
	$n = 1,312$	$n = 419$
Income		
<10K	6.5	5.2
10–20K	13.6	15.1
21–30K	17.3	18.6
31–40K	17.5	19.5
41–50K	14.9	14.9
51–70K	16.8	14.3
>70K	13.4	12.4
	$n = 1,234$	$n = 393$
Party Identification		
Democrat	46.6	38.8
Independent	6.9	8.3
Republican	46.5	52.9
	$n = 1,280$	$n = 407$
Ideology		
Liberal	39.2	24.2
Moderate	3.2	5
Conservative	57.6	70.8
	$n = 1,228$	$n = 388$

southern phenomenon that is not simply a product of the mix of individuals who live there.[12]

DISSECTING SOUTHERN WHITE ATTITUDES

That demographics do not differ across the two regions does not preclude using them to identify precisely where, if anywhere, southern prejudice is concentrated. To the contrary, if the level of blatant prejudice varies across social groups, it is incumbent on us to show it.

We must caution at the outset that the following analyses are based on small samples. There are only about 150 southern respondents in each of the two conditions, *Baseline* and *Black Family*, which we will now break down further by selected respondent characteristics. We can nonetheless explore several bivariate relationships. We will see presently that one relationship is too strong to be a product of happenstance.

To ascertain where racial prejudice is concentrated, if at all, we considered three demographic characteristics. For obvious reasons, the first is age. Nearly all studies that find regional convergence in racial attitudes attribute it largely to new cohorts who were born after the dramatic changes brought about by the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of the mid-1960s. Presumably these generations, including those individuals growing up in the South, underwent a different socialization process than their parents. These are the Vanderbilt students described by Firebaugh and Davis who contend that "things are not like that anymore."

If the relatively young should be less prejudiced, so, according to numerous studies, should the better educated. Scholars have long looked to education as the vehicle by which to reduce if not eliminate racial animosity, and, on the whole, empirical work supports this assumption (Luskin 1987, 1990; Sniderman, Brody, and Kuklinski 1984). Jackman argues, though, that the educated really are not less prejudiced; they just know the "right" answers (Jackman 1978, 1981; Jackman and Muha 1984). Jackman raises a crucial issue, and only by employing more unobtrusive measures of racial attitudes than those found in traditional surveys can we begin to resolve it.

Finally, we include gender. Available evidence indicates that women are more liberal than men on a variety of social issues (Shapiro and Mahajan 1986). Whether this relationship holds in the South remains an open and, we think, intriguing question. On the one hand, the fact that men and women are equally exposed to prevailing and, based on our earlier findings, still intense prejudice would predict little gender difference. Moreover, these men and women also share jobs, households, and the like, with which comes frequent and sometimes intimate interaction. On the other hand, historians have argued that southern

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[12] If anything, our not perfectly representative sample of southern whites underestimates the level of prejudice in the region.

racism has its deepest roots in white males' fears about black men interacting with white women. Such arguments, although largely speculative, have been commonplace among specialists in southern history (Cash 1941; Williamson 1984). If these arguments hold true, the gender difference could be especially pronounced in the South: strong gut reactions among men, less visceral reactions among women.

Table 4 reports the estimated percent angry over the thought of a black family moving in next door by whether the individual was born before or in or after 1960.[13] Our list experiment uncovers a generational difference that falls somewhere between Firebaugh and Davis's discovery of a large and growing gap among southern generations (1988) and Steeh and Schuman's contention (1992) that no narrowing occurred, at least among those coming of age in 1959 or later. We cannot speak to trends, of course, but the figures in Table 4 indicate that, first, younger generations show more racial tolerance and, second, despite an estimated 12% generational difference, even those reaching adolescence in the 1970s or later voice considerably more anger toward integration than our sample of nonsoutherners. Although the data partially support the plea that "things are not like that anymore," they lend little credence to the contention that "we [young southerners] are no more racially prejudiced than northerners."

[13] Ideally we would like to use a later date, say 1970, as the break point. We do not have enough cases to categorize this way and thus might be slightly underestimating the effect of age.

TABLE 4

ESTIMATED MEAN LEVEL OF ANGER IN THE SOUTH OVER A BLACK
FAMILY MOVING IN NEXT DOOR, BY AGE, EDUCATION, AND GENDER
(WHITES ONLY)

Condition	Age		Education		Gender	
	Born Before 1960	Born in 1960 or After	No College	Attended College	Males	Females
Baseline	1.97	1.88	2.09	1.79	1.76	2.12
	(.78)	(.90)	(.78)	(.80)	(.84)	(.73)
	$n = 110$	$n = 28$	$n = 75$	$n = 64$	$n = 67$	$n = 71$
Black family	2.44	2.23	2.51	2.11	2.54	2.16
	(1.08)	(.81)	(1.05)	(.86)	(.98)	(.99)
	$n = 90$	$n = 46$	$n = 89$	$n = 47$	$n = 75$	$n = 62$
Estimated % angry	47	35	42	32	78	4***

Note: Entries are means; standard deviations are in parentheses.
***$p < .001$ for difference in estimated percent angry within demographic category (one-tailed tests).

A similar story emerges with respect to the effects of education (Table 4). Those who have attended college express less racial intolerance than those who have not, but still much more than nonsouthern whites. Although the small number of cases precludes a multivariate analysis, it would appear that racial prejudice is lower among well-educated young people than among others living in the South.

Finally, Table 4 reports the difference in racial attitudes between men and women. Of the three characteristics we have considered here, gender far outdistances the other two as a predictor of racial animosity. More than 70% of the southern white males in our sample become angry at the thought of a black family moving in next door, while only an estimated 4% of the southern white females do. This is an astounding difference, about which we must be skeptical. We find no evidence, however, that the women falling into the sample of southern respondents are either better educated or younger, on the whole, than the men. Nor do the men appear to overrepresent conservatives, Republicans, the less educated, and the like. Even supposing that the gender gap is exaggerated in these data, one conclusion seems beyond dispute: given the chance to say what they really feel about a black family moving in next door, southern white men reveal a dramatically different attitude from that of their female counterparts.

In the context of this finding, it is timely to reiterate exactly what the list experiment measures: not some considered, rational calculation about a black family moving in, but a strong, visceral reaction to the very thought. If our estimates even approach accuracy, then racial animosity continues to pervade the culture of the southern group that retains a hegemonic hold on most of the region's institutions. In analyses not reported here, we found nothing in our data—greater fear of blacks, more widespread adherence to traditional values, and so forth—that begins to explain why.

A HIDDEN SOUTH?

Why have more investigators not identified the widespread antiblack sentiment among southerners that our unobtrusive measure has uncovered? We have offered one hypothesis: the kinds of questions commonly asked in surveys—"Do you favor or oppose a black family's moving in next door?" "Do you favor or oppose interracial dating?"—require respondents to answer the interviewer directly. Wanting to avoid any appearance of prejudice, they underreport their true level of racial animosity.

The Race and Politics Survey includes a wide array of obtrusive measures of racial attitudes to test this hypothesis, so many that we cannot report the responses to all of them here.[14] We have selected three items for consideration.

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[14] The patterns across the whole array of survey items are remarkably consistent. Some items differentiate the regions better than others, but we found nothing, overall, to change our conclusion.

The first takes the traditional form; it consists of a single question that all respondents receive and that all must answer directly. Substantively, the question deals with integration and thus approximates the list experiment's measure of prejudice. The other two items take an experimental form in that some randomly selected respondents receive one version of the question, others a different version. In both experiments, the target group, that is, the social group to whom explicit reference is made, distinguishes one version from another. The analytic logic of an experimental question is to compare responses across the different versions. Note that each version, just like the traditional item, requires the respondents to answer the interviewer directly and explicitly. By itself, in other words, each version of an experimental survey question works just like a traditional measure.

The first item asks respondents whether they favor or oppose blacks' buying houses in white suburbs. Like our *Black Family* item, it taps reactions to integration. Whereas the former refers to a single black family, the latter refers to blacks in general. All else being equal, the traditional measure, blacks moving into the suburbs, should evoke the greater negative reaction. On the other hand, a black family's moving in next door should be more anathema to a prejudiced person than blacks' moving into white suburbs. One item is personal and immediate, the other distant and abstract, especially among those who do not live in predominantly white suburbs.

A large majority of white respondents, southerners and nonsoutherners alike, voice approval over blacks owning houses in white suburbs (Figure 5). Combining the *Somewhat Favor* and *Strongly Favor* categories, 80% of southerners and 89% of nonsoutherners support black Americans moving into white suburbs. Recall, in contrast, our earlier estimate that some 42% of southern respondents express anger at the idea of a black family's moving in next door. It seems implausible that 80% of southerners approve of integrated housing while at the same time 42% express *anger* at the idea of a *single* family moving into the neighborhood. In this case, either social desirability effects are contaminating the traditional measure or the unobtrusive measure itself has problems. Although we cannot fully rule out the latter possibility, we find the former more likely.

Since the traditional item measures intensity as well as direction of opinion, we can also ascertain whether the percentage who strongly oppose blacks' buying houses in the suburbs matches the percentage who express anger toward the black family item. Among southern respondents, 13% and 6% *Somewhat Oppose* and *Strongly Oppose*, respectively, blacks' buying homes in white suburbs; the equivalent figures among nonsoutherners are 8% and 3%. If we assume that strongly opposing is roughly equivalent to getting angry, then the unobtrusive measure again identifies more widespread prejudice than the traditional item, as well as much greater prejudice in the South.[15]

[15] This said, it should not go unnoticed that many people express their animosity even when asked directly.

FIGURE 5

ATTITUDE TOWARD BLACKS BUYING HOMES IN WHITE SUBURBS,
BY REGION
(WHITES ONLY)
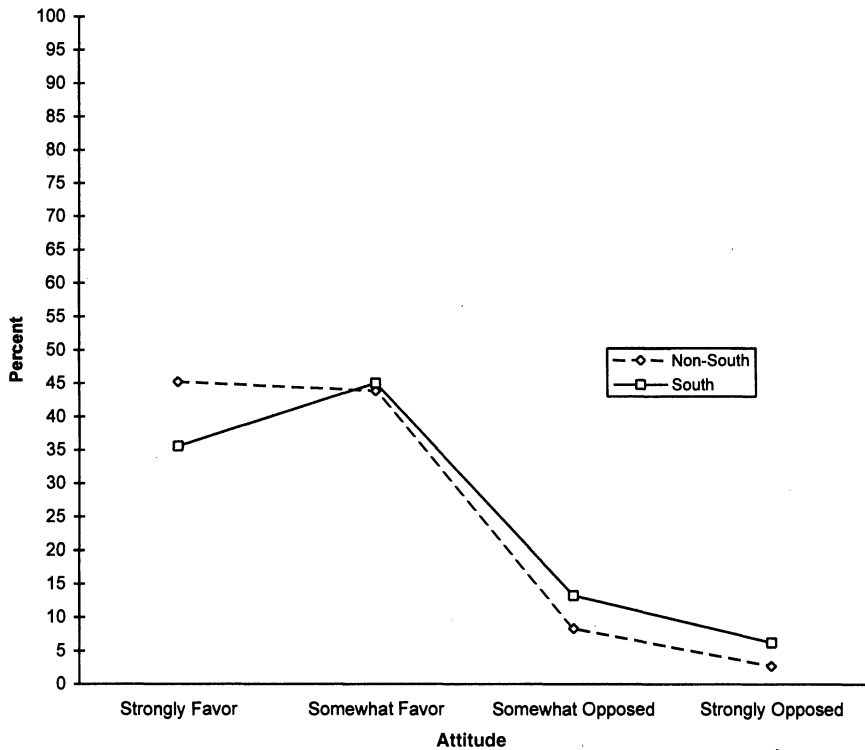
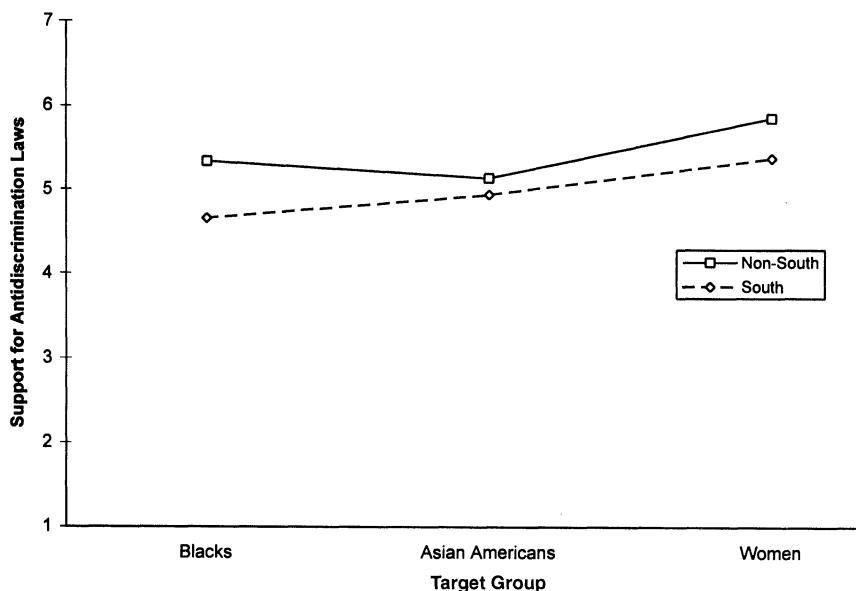*Note:* Difference in regional response is significant at $p < .001$ (one-tailed test).
$n = 1,285$, nonsouthern respondents; $n = 409$, southern respondents.

Our other two traditional measures take an experimental form. Students of
public opinion have begun to turn, with remarkable success, to experimental
survey items, in part to circumvent the inherent weaknesses of traditional survey
items and in part because these questions offer researchers the leverage of tightly
controlled laboratory experiments. The researcher creates different versions of
essentially the same question by changing the target group and then compares
responses to the different versions. As we noted earlier, however, this otherwise
creative approach still asks respondents to answer the interviewer directly, and
thus such experimental questions are also subject to social desirability effects.

In the first experiment that varies the target group, interviewees indicated their degree of support for antidiscrimination laws that protect (1) blacks, (2) women, or (3) Asian Americans. Each respondent was randomly assigned to one and only one of the three experimental conditions. Figure 6 summarizes the responses.

Southerners are most supportive of antidiscrimination laws if they protect women, less supportive if the laws pertain to Asian Americans, and least supportive if they apply to blacks. The referent group does matter, and African Americans fare least well. However, nonsoutherners exhibit a similar pattern of support, with two exceptions. First, they express less support of laws that protect Asian Americans than of laws that protect blacks. Second, they support the antidiscrimination laws more than southerners across all three target groups. In other words, while southerners tend to be less supportive of discrimination laws

FIGURE 6

SUPPORT FOR ANTIDISCRIMINATION LAWS THAT PROTECT BLACKS, ASIAN AMERICANS, AND WOMEN, BY REGION (WHITES ONLY)

Note: Difference in regional response to the target group is significant at $p = .13$ (one-tailed test). Scale: 1 = strongly oppose: 7 = strongly favor.

Minimum number of nonsouthern respondents in any condition = 427; minimum number of southern respondents in any single condition = 123.

that apply to blacks (Bobo and Kluegel 1993), this difference appears to stem largely from a more general aversion to such group-targeted laws.

A second and similar experimental item reads as follows: "In the past, the Irish, the Italians, the Jews, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. What about blacks/new immigrants from Europe? Should they do the same without any special favors?" The experimental manipulation here, as previously, is the target group: either blacks or new immigrants from Europe.

Figure 7 reports the distributions of responses by region. When the referent is immigrants from Europe, the responses of southerners and nonsoutherners

FIGURE 7

ATTITUDE TOWARD BLACKS/IMMIGRANTS HAVING TO WORK THEIR WAY
UP, BY REGION
(WHITES ONLY)
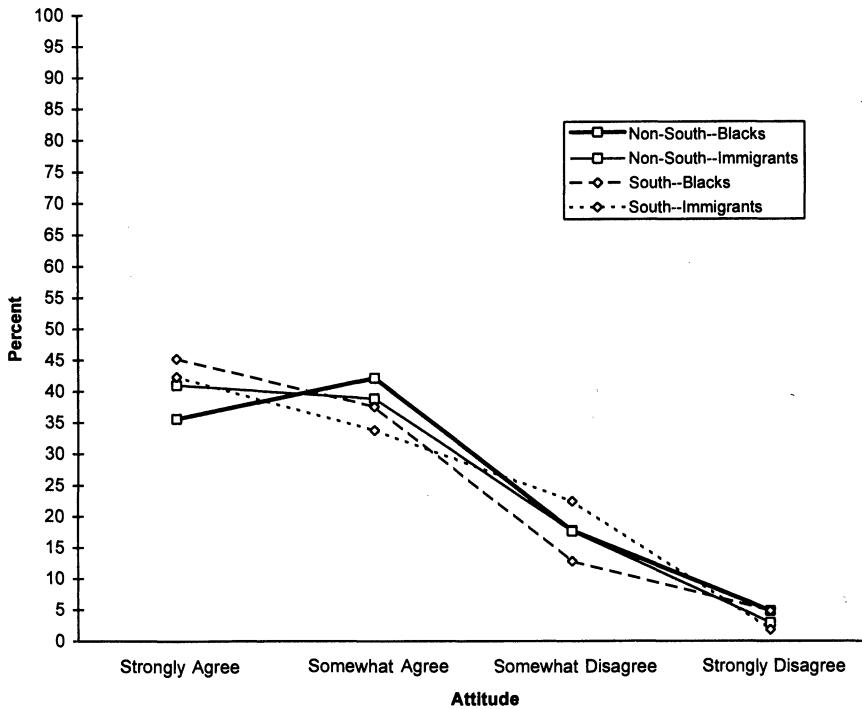
Note: Difference in regional response to blacks and immigrants is significant at $p = .09$ (one-tailed test).

Minimum number of nonsouthern respondents in a single condition = 673; minimum number of southern respondents in a single condition = 196.

are indistinguishable. On the other hand, southerners more strongly support the assertion under the "blacks" condition. This regional difference in racial attitudes, however, fails to reach the traditional (.05) level of statistical significance.

All in all, then, the obtrusive survey items identify a difference in regional attitudes on race. It is a minor difference, not a gap. In contrast, the list experiment reveals a true gap, on blatant and perhaps on latent prejudice as well. In the former case, the words "new South" come close to ringing true; in the latter, they do not.

VALIDITY ISSUES

We have offered the list experiment as a vehicle for reducing social desirability effects. The evidence we brought to bear indicates it serves that purpose. Social desirability is not the only threat to validity, however, and we would be remiss not to mention, if only briefly, three other issues. One has to do with content, a second with question wording, and the last with the introductory wording to the list experiment. Kuklinski and Cobb (1996) discuss these and other issues in much greater detail.

We chose the "black family moving in next door" item to measure racial prejudice. It is not the only available indicator. Others that quickly come to mind include interracial dating, interracial marriages, and, especially illustrative here, *several* black families moving into the neighborhood. Suppose that "several families" evokes different images and thus markedly stronger reactions than "a single family." We would be hard put to defend the latter's validity as *the* measure of prejudice.

Ideally, we would have included each of the preceding items in yet additional versions of the list experiment; practically, this was impossible. We therefore adopted an alternative strategy of conducting a set of exploratory studies in which we used one or another of the possible indicators of prejudice. The estimates tended to converge, with interracial dating and interracial marriages producing somewhat higher estimates of prejudice. Although using either of these two items conceivably would have identified more racial animosity than we reported above, we doubt that our conclusion would change.

The *Affirmative Action* item—black leaders pushing for affirmative action—raises a second and very different issue: question wording. Contrary to the basic principle of survey research that a question should include only one subject, the item refers both to **Black Leaders** and *Affirmative Action*. It is therefore vulnerable to two, related claims: (1) different individuals could be responding to different words and (2) the item is not a pure measure of attitudes toward affirmative action.

These are worthy criticisms of which we were aware when we constructed the measure. Our violation of the principle that questionnaire items refer to only one subject reflects a decision to identify affirmative action policy with its strongest,

most active, and most visible proponents. This is a case where our conceptual objective came into conflict with a methodological principle, and we opted for the former. As a practical matter, our exploratory studies included five different affirmative action items. The two that referred to black leaders provided estimates similar to the three that did not.

Finally, unlike traditional survey questions, the list experiment comes with an instruction set. How the instructions are framed will influence how people respond to the list of items that follows. We chose "indicate how many items make you angry" (see Kuklinski et al. n.d. for the justification). Not everyone will agree with this choice. The instruction sets a high threshold, higher, say, than "indicate how many items you oppose" or "how many items you find unacceptable." Our own studies suggest that substituting "oppose" for "make you angry" increases the estimated level of prejudice by an additional 12% or more. If anything, we have underreported the level of racial prejudice.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The civil rights movement that began in the late 1950s put race on the national political agenda. It has remained there ever since, and the media, Congress, and every president, Democrat or Republican, now routinely frame race as a national problem. But its severity, we have found, is not constant across the country. Historically, the South has been the stronghold of racial prejudice; it apparently continues to be so today. Some of the prejudice is blatant, as manifested in the anger expressed at the very thought of a black family moving in next door. Some might be latent, with affirmative action serving as the target. We must not forget that racial prejudice exists outside the South; nonetheless, it is the South, the region that tried to secede from the union nearly 150 years ago so as to maintain black slavery, that stands out today.

In their popular discussion of racial politics in the United States, Edsall and Edsall (1991, 53) observe that "race is no longer a straightforward, morally unambiguous force in American politics; instead, considerations of race are now deeply imbedded in the strategy and tactics of politics, in competing concepts of the function and responsibility of government, and in each voter's conceptual structure of moral and partisan identity." They are both wrong and right.

Wrong, we think, because when given a chance to express what they really feel, sizable numbers of white people, many concentrated in the South, say unequivocally that they feel anger and hostility toward black people. Among these people, racial prejudice is, still, an unambiguous force. Right, we think, because prejudiced whites, fearing the label "racist," avoid expressing their true racial attitudes publicly. Consequently race enters contemporary politics in subtle and nuanced ways, making it next to impossible to separate real from ostensible motivations.

In this latter sense, we too have discovered a "new South." What we found to be new is not a convergence of racial attitudes between the South and the rest of the country, but a reluctance among many of today's southerners to admit their feelings about blacks, at least to survey interviewers who ask them directly. Just a few decades ago, even this reluctance did not exist.

Two points warrant emphasis. First, our findings do not indict everyone who lives in the South. To the contrary, more than a majority of southern whites express no animosity toward blacks when given the opportunity. To characterize the region in one broad sweep would be an egregious error. Second, we cannot speak to the "symbolic racism" thesis (Kinder and Sears 1981). We constructed a measure to identify out-and-out prejudice and found it. Our story is about hidden prejudice, not the manifestation of prejudice.

Not all prejudice is hidden. Some individuals express their negative feelings even when asked directly. Presumably they either are oblivious to existing national norms or just do not care. But a large number are not oblivious and do care. Consequently, responses to traditional survey items fail to reveal the true level of prejudice, which in turn can bias parameter estimates in analyses that include such characteristics as ideology and education.

We are not offering the list experiment as a panacea. It has its own set of problems. Nonetheless, the methodology has demonstrated what many survey researchers undoubtedly have suspected all along: social desirability pervades surveys that ask about sensitive issues. The time has come to admit our suspicions and accept the challenge to develop better, more unobtrusive measures.

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