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Chapter 2

PREJUDICE AND POLITICS:

AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

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The specific studies presented in this book, each conceived on its own terms, are part of a larger framework on the analysis of prejudice and politics. We want, in this chapter, to call attention to this framework by sketching the intellectual background of the Race and Politics Project and commenting on its deeper-lying analytical themes. We hope, by engaging the classic studies of prejudice and politics, to illuminate three themes at the center of this book as a whole: the recovery of racial prejudice as a problem worthy of study; the inescapably contingent character of political judgments about issues of race, and the necessity (in a field of study that has made a virtue of repetition of measures) of innovations in measurement.

An Intellectual Chronology

Beginning slowly and suffering many reversals, the civil rights movement became a national force in the 1950s. Even so, the official apparatus and public practice of racial segregation, with its heraldry of apartheid, appeared fixed in place. The Supreme Court had announced, in the Brown decision, the end of the era of "separate but equal" in schools (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). But between the self-interested timidity of public officials and the self-righteous hostility of White Citizen Councils, Southern schools remained segregated. Yet, only a short time later, the landmark Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

Social science a generation ago provided both a record of the social and political change and an interpretation of its meaning. For generations, Americans who have never heard of Gunnar Myrdal think of race as an American dilemma. The issue of race, they recognize, has political and economic aspects, but it goes deeper than either. At its core, it represents a fundamental moral contradiction—between the highest principles that Americans, as Americans, held and the institutionalized practice of racial segregation. And, immediate obstacles notwithstanding, the outcome of this contradiction seemed certain. Americans, if forced to choose, would choose in favor of liberty, equality, and fair play.

And Americans, according to the first generation of systematic research on racial attitudes, increasingly did choose in favor of tolerance and equality. In an extended series of reports published in Scientific American, beginning in the mid-1950s and running through the 1970s, Herbert Hyman, Paul Sheatsley, and their colleagues tracked changes in the racial attitudes of white Americans, concentrating on public support for explicit racial segregation—for separate school systems, public accommodations, seating sections in public transportation, and residential areas. The first Scientific American study documented an historic transformation. An example will suffice. In 1942, only one third of whites believed that white students and black students should go to the same schools, and less than a half opposed the idea that there should be separate sections for Negroes (sic) in streetcars and buses; by 1956, one half of whites favored desegregation of schools, and nearly two-thirds supported desegregation of public transportation (Hyman and Sheatsley 1956).

Continuing studies, by Hyman, Sheatsley and their colleagues (Hyman and Sheatsley 1964, Greeley and Sheatsley 1971, and Taylor, Sheatsley, and Greeley 1978) and then by Howard Schuman and his (see Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985), made two further fundamental points. First, the progressive trend, so far from being a mere decade spurt, continued through the sixties, seventies, and eighties. Second, the trend, rather than being narrowly confined to the institutions of Jim Crow, represented a broad movement in favor of tolerance. There was, conspicuously, a collapse of popular support, initially in the North and later in the South, too, for racial segregation. But the change in social norms also extended to private interactions, with the barriers to blacks being invited as guests to a white's home, or being allowed to live in the same neighborhood, or marrying a white, being breached, albeit more slowly and in the face of more resistance than for more public and impersonal forms of interaction. Indeed, so far from being restricted to issues of race, the movement in favor of tolerance was being swept along by a broad current of open-mindedness, which unmistakably showed itself in increasing public support for the political rights of unpopular or controversial political or social groups, including communists, atheists and homosexuals.[1]

The sweep and seemingly irresistible momentum of the trend in favor of tolerance suggested that fundamental social processes were at work. In his classic study of political tolerance, Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties, Samuel Stouffer captured the spirit of this transformation of the society as a whole. "Great social, economic and technological forces," he declared, "are operating slowly and imperceptibly on the side of spreading tolerance. The rising level of education and the accompanying decline in authoritarian child-rearing practices increase independence of thought and respect for others whose ideas

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[1] The classic study was Stouffer (1992). For follow-up studies, see especially, Nunn, Crockett, and Williams (1978).

are different. The increasing geographic movement has a similar consequence, as well as the vicarious experiences supplied by the magic of our ever more powerful media of communications" (1992, 236). Here was the basis for a generation's optimism. The last of the Scientific American reports, in particular, focused on a trio of factors promoting racial tolerance—the entrance of new age-cohorts, increased educational opportunities, and the liberalization of the general climate of opinion in American society (Taylor, Sheatsley, and Greeley 1978, 42-49). Fundamental and very nearly automatic social processes were driving forward the liberalization of American society.

It would be quite wrong to give the impression that the Scientific American reports were insensitive to complexity or lacking in qualification. Throughout the series, repeatedly they showed that white opinion was far from uniform. The willingness to accept blacks in public places did not carry with it a comparable readiness to accept them in private ones, and if Americans were markedly more tolerant than they had been, it did not mean they had become tolerant in any absolute sense. Moreover, even if the account of change was predominantly social and mechanistic, it was not entirely so. Contrasting school districts within the South which had achieved significant desegregation with those which had resisted it, the Scientific American investigators observed that the more the public schools had in fact desegregated, the more public support there was for racial desegregation, suggesting that public action in favor of school desegregation can lead to increases in public support for it, as well as the other way around. As they remarked, "Apparently, the pattern is that as official action works to bury what is already regarded as a lost cause, public acceptance of integration increases because opinions are readjusted to the inevitable reality" (Hyman and Sheatsley 1956, 21). Their argument, if right, throws a direct light on the role of local leadership in the dynamics of societal change. Instead of capitalizing on a sense of inevitability in the wake of the Brown decision, a large percentage of local officials made evident their reluctance to press ahead with school desegregation, in the process not only foregoing the momentum in favor of desegregation but legitimizing opposition to it.

There is a broader point, obscured in subsequent studies. The authors of the Scientific American reports were well aware of the resistance, in the North as well as the South, to racial change. Through the 1960s and 1970s, they took pains to detail, among other things, local conflicts over school integration; the national drama in Little Rock in 1957; George Wallace's ominous success in Northern as well as Southern presidential primaries. Their argument was not that the American dilemma had been resolved, but rather that one measure of the strength of the progressive trend in favor of racial tolerance was precisely its continuation in the face of all the controversies over race.

The Revisionist Work

The Scientific American studies, with their demonstration of a gathering momentum of the movement to racial tolerance, represented the high water mark of faith in the power of American idealism. Before the last of the studies even had appeared, however, the studies came under fire, with critics, from the 1970s on, rejecting or radically qualifying their optimism of the Scientific American studies. And the next generation of research changed the climate of opinion. A belief that the strongest force in favor of racial progress was the commitment of white Americans to decency and fair play gave way to a skepticism, even a cynicism, about their professions of support for the principles of racial equality and tolerance.

The revisionism of the second generation was woven out of distinct strands of argument and we want, therefore, to lay out three of the most influential lines of criticism. The first was formulated by Sears and his colleagues (Kinder and Sears 1981, McConahay and Hough 1976, Sears and Kinder 1971). Curiously, the starting point of their criticism of the argument of the Scientific American reports was acceptance of their findings. Citing the Scientific American studies, Sears and his colleagues declared that "White America has become, in principle at least, racially egalitarian" (Kinder and Sears, 416). Yet resistance to racial change persisted. There were the flashpoint issues of busing, crime and poverty, and, increasingly, of affirmative action, not to mention the evident handicap that black candidates for public office had to labor under (Sears, Hensler and Speer 1979). Large numbers of white Americans, though approving the idea of racial equality, were resisting nearly every active effort to achieve it. Racism in its overt form was no longer a major political force, the Scientific American studies had showed: but if racism of the traditional stripe did not lie behind white resistance to racial equality for blacks, what did?

The answer, according to Sears and his colleagues, was a new racism. Like the old racism, it centered on dislike of blacks. Also like the old, it appeared early in the developmental cycle, during pre-adult years, and once acquired, persisted through adulthood. But unlike the old racism, which expressed itself in overtly derogatory evaluations of blacks, the new racism is subtle. It takes the form of beliefs that on their face are not necessarily racist. Before, racists would say blatantly that blacks are lazy. Now, they will say instead that if blacks are only willing to work hard, they can be as well off as whites and, if challenged, will protest that, so far from being racists, the whole point is that they believe that blacks can achieve as much as whites if they are willing to apply themselves.

The new racism also is new in a second and still more significant respect. Rather than having to rely solely on its own strength, it has now been fused together with a whole array of traditional American values, and above all, individualism. So understood, modern or symbolic racism "represents a form of resistance to change in the racial status quo based on moral feelings that blacks violate such traditional American values as individualism and self-reliance, the work ethic, obedience, and discipline" (Kinder and Sears 1981, 416). It

would be a shame to overlook the fine irony of this formulation. By positing the existence of a new racism in addition to, and independent of the old, it is possible to accept the validity of the <u>Scientific American</u> findings of increased racial tolerance, and yet turn Myrdal's confidence in the American Creed on its head. The eclipse of overt racism, captured in initial public opinion studies, would have seemed to confirm the buoyancy of the first generation of public opinion research on racial attitudes. But these findings, the argument now runs, do not offer reason for optimism—indeed, if anything the opposite. The eclipse of overt racism has been counterbalanced by the advent of a new, more modern racism. And modern racism, though no less noxious than the old, is more subtle and now has the backing of "the proudest and finest of American values" (Sears 1988, 54).

Myrdal's thesis can also be challenged by challenging the <u>Scientific American</u> findings outright, and toward the end of the 1970s Mary Jackman and her colleague took this route (Jackman 1978, Jackman 1981, and Jackman and Muha 1984). Racial tolerance, they contended, manifests itself at two distinct levels: support for the principle of tolerance, and support for the principle in practice, by backing public policies to achieve it. The <u>Scientific American</u> studies concluded that education promoted tolerance. But if better educated people are more likely to have a genuine and well-grounded commitment to tolerance <u>because</u> they are better educated, then the better educated people are, the more consistent they should be in translating their general support for the principle of tolerance into specific policies to achieve it. But, Jackman contended, although the more educated are more likely to favor general tolerance, they are not more likely to support applied tolerance, and what is more, the connection between general and applied tolerance is no tighter for the more educated than for the less.

The <u>Scientific American</u> studies, if Jackman's argument is correct, are tracking, not a stronger commitment to racial integration, but "a greater familiarity with the appropriate democratic position on racial integration" (Jackman 1978, 322). Education may teach a lesson of tolerance but, if Jackman is right, the lesson is learned only superficially. Well-educated whites are more likely to know the "right" thing to say; perhaps more likely even to believe it the right thing to do. But their commitment to racial tolerance and equality is superficial. And when they must choose between racial tolerance and competing values, as inevitably they will in the swirl of democratic politics, they choose to give up racial equality. Thus the appearance of racial progress the <u>Scientific American</u> reports recorded, though not quite a sham, is largely an illusion.

If the first two lines of criticism did not suffice to rebut the optimism of the first generation of public opinion research on race, there was a third, led by Schuman, Steeh and Bobo (1985). The hinge of their analysis was a contrast of white racial attitudes at the level of principle and of policy. In a uniquely

panoramic analysis, Schuman and his colleagues first documented the continuing momentum in favor of racial desegregation among whites at the level of principle.[2] But then, as a second step, they tracked white racial attitudes toward a large array of specific policies intended to achieve racial equality (for example, whether the federal government has a responsibility to assure fair treatment in employment for blacks or to see that white and black children should go to the same schools). The patterns for the two, they show, differ. At any one point in time, there always is markedly less public support for policies intended to make the principle of racial equality a reality than for the principle in the abstract. Still more tellingly, over time, although support for the principle of racial equality has shot up, support for policies to realize equality has either remained flat or, in some instances, even fallen off (Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985, Table 3.2 [88-89]).

Why the difference between principle and policy? Unlike Sears and his colleagues, Schuman and his do not see it as a sign of a new form of racism. Unlike Jackman and hers, they do not read it as evidence of the superficiality of white Americans' commitment to the principle of racial equality. Instead they reason that if whites resist government programs to assist blacks in becoming equal even in the face of a genuine belief of racial equality, there must be a sticking point. The exact nature of this sticking point is not entirely clear, Schuman and his colleagues point out. It is unlikely that ordinary citizens resist government activism in the area of race either because they have strongly held views about government activism across-the-board, since whether they favor or oppose government intervention seems to have much to do both with the particular domain of policy and their own political point of view. Nor is it likely that they resist government activism on race because of a loss of confidence in government efficacy and honesty, since public resistance to government efforts to achieve racial equality in particular does not appear to be rooted in a general cynicism about government. Nor, finally, is it likely they resist it because of an aversion to federal intervention specifically, since resistance to local initiatives to assure racial equality (for example, in the form of fair housing laws) is just as marked. Instead, as an explanation of the principle-policy puzzle, Schuman and his colleagues offer their "own tentative interpretation . . . that it is constraint of any kind that is disliked, and that the extent to which respondents accept constraints is heavily influenced by the degree to which they support a particular policy goal" (Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo 1985, 189).

On at least three different grounds, then, the second generation of public opinion research on American racial attitudes questioned the optimism of the first. The values of the American Creed would not bring about racial fairness because they were themselves implicated in a new racism (the position of Sears and his colleagues); or because they had only a superficial hold on Americans (the argument of Jackman and her colleagues); or because they were frustrated by an aversion to constraint (the hypothesis of Schuman and his

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[2] See especially Table 3.1, on pages 74-76.

colleagues). It may have been difficult to agree with all three. It was not, however, hard to accept any two. And even if one concurred with only one, the conclusion to draw was the same: pessimism about the prospects for racial progress.

The Concept of Prejudice

It may be premature to judge whether this verdict of pessimism was justified or not, but it is timely to consider whether it has limits. There is, most obviously, the question of whether the second generation of research was well done. Early on we looked at much of it.[3] In preparing for this study, however, instead of only critically evaluating what had been done, it seemed to us crucial to bring into focus what had yet to be done.

The first thing to do stood out at once: to pay attention to racial prejudice. Over the last two decades nearly every aspect of American racial attitudes was measured except the most important: racial prejudice. As Schuman and his colleagues have pointed out, in all the major studies through the 1970s and 1980s, of the three principal sources of trend data, only one, the NORC, has information at all on white attitudes toward blacks, and the information it has is limited to a single question, which was in any event discontinued after 1968.

Why racial prejudice, of all things, was omitted from the study of racial attitudes is far from clear. One reason, it has been suggested, was a belief that merely to ask the questions necessarily had "racist overtones."[4] Another followed from the symbolic racism research program of Sears and his colleagues. Traditional prejudice, they believed, had all but disappeared (Kinder and Sears 1981, 416). It therefore made little sense, it seemed to follow, to see if substantial number of whites would agree with frankly derogatory assertions about blacks.[5] Whatever the reason, the consequence was the same. Whether racial prejudice was common or scarce in the 1970s and 80s; whether racial prejudice is more pervasive in some parts of American society than in others; even so essential a question as whether there now is less racial prejudice than there was twenty years ago—all are unanswerable questions now because the right questions were not asked then.

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[3] The inquiries include Sniderman and Tetlock (1986a, 1986b), and Sniderman, Brody, and Kuklinski (1991).

[4] This is the speculation of Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo (1984, 124).

[5] The 1985 NES pilot study, which focused on the politics of race under the direction of Donald R. Kinder and David O. Sears, rejected recommendations to measure white attitudes toward blacks directly, choosing instead to use their symbolic racism measure exclusively.

Which made it necessary for us to determine, since racial prejudice manifestly needed to be recovered in the study of racial politics, what racial prejudice means. Below, we list a number of conceptual definitions of prejudice.[6]

? Prejudiced attitudes . . . are irrational, unjust, or intolerant dispositions toward others. They are often accompanied by stereotyping. This is the attribution of supposed characteristics of the whole group to all its individual members (Milner 1975, 9).

? It seems most useful to us to define prejudice as a failure of rationality or a failure of justice or a failure of human—heartedness in an individual's attitude toward members of another ethnic group (Harding, Prochansky, Kutner, and Chein 1969, 6).

? An emotional, rigid attitude, a predisposition to respond to a certain stimulus in a certain way toward a group of people (Simpson and Yinger 1985, 21).

? Thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant (Allport 1954, 7).

? Ethnic prejudice is an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group (Allport 1954, 9).

? An unsubstantiated prejudgment of an individual or group, favorable or unfavorable in character, tending to action in a consonant direction (Klineberg 1968, 439).

? A pattern of hostility in interpersonal relations which is directed against an entire group, or against its individual members; it fulfills a specific irrational function for its bearer (Ackerman and Jahoda 1950, 2—3).

? Hostility or aggression toward individuals on the basis of their group membership (Buss 1961, 245).

? Group prejudice is now commonly viewed as having two components: hostility and misinformation (Kelman and Pettigrew 1959, 436).

? An unfavorable attitude toward an object which tends to be highly stereotyped, emotionally charged, and not easily changed by contrary information (Krech, Crutchfield, and Ballachey 1962, 321).

Four points of agreement stand out. First, prejudice refers to a response to members of a group by virtue of their membership in the group. Milner, for example, speaks of "the attribution of . . . characteristics of the whole group to all its individual members" (see Duckitt 1992, Table 2.1 [p. 10]); Allport (1954, 9), of a response "based on . . . generalization . . . directed toward a group as whole, or toward an individual because he is a member of that group;" and Jones (1986), of a "generalization from a group characterization

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[6] Some of these conceptual definitions we have collected ourselves, but we are especially indebted to Duckitt (1992) for his discussion.

(stereotype) to an individual member of the group" (cited by Dovidio and Gaertner 1986, 3). It makes sense, in ordinary language, to speak of one person being prejudiced against another without an attribution of membership in a group necessarily being invoked. For our purposes, however, the concept of prejudice presumes a response directed toward individuals by virtue of their membership in a group.

Second, prejudice involves an <u>evaluative</u> orientation. In principle, an evaluative orientation can be positive as well as negative, and there are indeed studies of "in-group bias"—the disposition to reward members of the same group as oneself—as well as of "out-group bias"—the disposition to sanction members of a group different from oneself (Tajfel 1970). Nonetheless, as the definitions of prejudice enumerated above make plain, archetypically the evaluative orientation characteristic of prejudice is negative. Notice the references to dispositions that are "unjust or intolerant" (Milner 1975, 9), "a failure of human-heartedness" (Harding, Proshansky, Kutner, and Chein 1969, 6), a "pattern of hostility" (Ackerman and Jahoda 1950, 2-3), or "hostility or aggression toward individuals on the basis of their group membership" (Buss 1961, 245). In sum, feelings of contempt, disdain, antipathy, dislike, distaste, and aversion toward members of a group, by virtue of their membership in the group, are at the center of the concept of prejudice.

Third, prejudice involves a negative evaluative orientation toward a group or member of a group that is <u>incorrect</u>. The presumption of an attribution that is not only negative but also erroneous is critical, and is conveyed in a variety of ways—in references, for example, to "the attribution of <u>supposed</u> characteristics" (Milner 1975, 9); "thinking ill of others <u>without sufficient warrant</u>" (Allport 1954, 7); to "a <u>faulty</u> generalization" (Allport 1954, 9); to "<u>misinformation</u>" (Kelman and Pettigrew 1959, 436). In saying that prejudice involves a faulty attribution, we are not suggesting that the exact sense in which an error is being made is clear, only that it is unequivocally clear that prejudice involves an erroneous attribution of a negative characteristic to a group as a whole (or to a member of a group by virtue of his or her membership).

Fourth, there is a requirement of consistency. By way of analogy, consider judging whether a particular person is politically a liberal. To learn that he took a liberal position on one issue on one occasion offers little help; the question is, rather, whether he reliably and predictably takes liberal positions on issues of the day. In saying this, we are not suggesting that a liberal is perfectly consistent, only that the more consistently liberal a person's political choices, the more liberal he or she is considered to be. Exactly the same principle holds for prejudice. It is one thing to categorize a person as a bigot because he offers, on a particular occasion, a negative judgment of a particular social group; it is another if he does so regularly and predictably. Evaluative consistency—above all, consistency in the application of negative attributions to social groups—is the mark of prejudice.

In sum, it is widely agreed that prejudice consists in attributions (1) about groups or members of groups, by virtue of their membership in the group, that are (2) disparaging and hostile, (3) false, or at least without warrant, and (4) consistently made. *Accordingly, by prejudice we mean a readiness consistently to attribute negative characteristics (or to decline to attribute positive ones) to a group or to members of a group by virtue of their membership in the group. The more consistently a person attributes negative characteristics (or declines to attribute positive ones) to a group, the more prejudiced he or she is.*

Prejudice, so understood, is the focal point of this study, integral to the pioneering analyses of negative judgments of blacks by Peffley and Hurwitz (chapter 4), the unobtrusive measurement of racial anger by Kuklinski and Cobb (chapter 3), the interaction of prejudice and ideology by Carmines and Layman, and the linkage between prejudice and welfare by Gilens (chapter 7).

The Contingency of Judgments

If one irony of the second generation of research on the politics of race is a neglect of racial prejudice, a second is the neglect of politics itself. The analyses of Jackman, for example, omit expressly political considerations, most conspicuously political ideology, and when it is taken into account (Jackman 1978), the principal-policy gap turns out to be rooted, not racial hypocrisy, but in ideological consistency. A principal contribution of this study, however, is to drive home the centrality of politics by highlighting the contingency of political judgments.

Political judgments can be contingent in one of two senses. In the first, to say that people's political judgments are contingent is to say that in making political choices, instead of depending on their general political orientations, they rely on the specific framing of the choice. In the second, and stronger sense, to say political judgments are contingent is to say that, in making their political choices, people take account of the framing of issues in light of their general political orientations.

Contingency, in the first sense, is the centerpiece of the chapter by Stoker. Public opinion surveys, she argues, characteristically canvass citizens' evaluations of public policies in the abstract, but judgments about public policy are inherently contextual. The courts, conspicuously, do not reach a judgment about the propriety of public policies in the abstract. Instead they weigh the merits of claimants in the context of justifications advanced in specific cases. By extension, Stoker suggests, citizens' judgments about a policy may be responsive to the specific justifications given in its behalf.

In a surprising move, Stoker applies this conception of the inherent contingency of political judgments to white attitudes toward racial quotas; surprising because, if whites have staked out a position on any issue,

they surely have on this issue. Yet, as she shows, even when affirmative action involves explicit quotas, support can be significantly bolstered depending on its specific justification.

Contingency in the strong sense is the centerpiece of the chapter by Carmines and Layman. Their starting point is a fundamental puzzle in the politics of race. Judged by the size of the (zero order) correlations between whites' feelings toward blacks and their positions on public policies dealing with blacks, the impact of racial prejudice is modest (Sniderman and Carmines 1997). But surely the conclusion that prejudice is only a minor factor does not quite ring right. By exploring the contingency of political judgments Carmines and Layman show just where it goes wrong.

The politics of race, they observe, are defined by the party system. The Democratic and Republican parties, at their core, are committed to competing points of view. On issue after issue the Democratic party favors, and the Republican party opposes centrally-directed, ameliorative programs. Just for this reason, it has become common to suggest that the Republican party and the conservatism it espouses is driven by racism. In an ingenious analysis, Carmines and Layman turn this suggestion on its head. Republicans, if they share their party's creed, have a reason to oppose activist welfare programs, and this reason is as relevant if they feel positively toward blacks as if they feel negatively toward them. By contrast, Democrats, if they feel negatively toward blacks, will resist programs to benefit blacks that they know, as Democrats, they should support. The paradoxical consequence: although prejudice is more common on the right, it is more powerful in shaping the political thinking of the left.

Methodological Innovations in the Study of Race

The second generation of research, for all its criticism of the interpretations of the first, stayed within the same measurement framework—and thereby was bound to the same conceptual framework. The third characteristic of this research program, by contrast, is innovation—and, in consequence, discovery.

This commitment to innovation takes many different forms. Its fundamental underpinning, however, is the use of computer-assisted interviewing to refashion the role of experimentation in public opinion surveys. Until the development of computer-assisted interviewing, public opinion polls had to rely on paper-and-pencil questionnaires. Because these questionnaires had to be printed in advance, experiments were highly constrained in design, typically involving only a single variation of a single factor. In turn design constraints translated into constraints in objectives, with the so-called "split ballot" experiments overwhelmingly restricted to questions of measurement rather than substance.

By contrast, through the facilities of the Computer-Assisted Survey Methods Program (CSM) and the Survey Research Center (SRC) of the University of California, a new approach to experimentation was

developed. In a computer-assisted regime, the questionnaire is a dynamic instrument controlled by a computer program. Test items are "composed" at the moment of application. At the moment of application, the computer program selects at random from among the values assignable to each experimental facet. In consequence, each experiment can have multiple facets; each facet can take on multiple values; each study can carry out multiple experiments each independent of each other. It is worth remarking that, notwithstanding the complexity of the experiments now possible, their administration is effortless for the interviewer and invisible to the respondent.[7]

What distinguishes this study is the innovative use of this new methodological platform for the substantive analysis of both its principal concerns—the role of prejudice and the contingency of political judgments. Consider three examples. In chapter 4, Peffley and Hurwitz explore the impact of attitudes toward blacks in general on evaluation of blacks as individuals. In thinking about the impact of racial prejudice, the question conventionally posed is this: To what extent are responses to matters of race predictable, given knowledge of how negatively whites feel toward blacks? But in real life, it is rarely a matter of responding to a person who is black—and only black. They have, in addition to being black, other characteristics, some inviting a positive response, others a negative one. Taking advantage of computer-assisted interviewing, Peffley and Hurwitz present a set of innovative experiments exploring, for the first time in general population surveys, the conditional influence of racial prejudice. Their findings are, we think, strikingly original. If whites' attitudes toward blacks in general are positive, it makes remarkably little difference if the particular black to whom they are responding has a negative characteristic; but if their attitudes toward blacks in general are negative, it makes a big difference if he or she has a positive characteristic. This asymmetry, if confirmed by subsequent studies, has manifestly important implications.

As a second example of innovation, consider the chapter by Kuklinski and Cobb. The problem they tackle is one of the most vexing in the study of racial attitudes. Surely some white Americans, when asked how they feel about black Americans, will say not what they really think, but what they think is appropriate to say. But if we can not take them at their word—and in a public opinion interview all we have are their words—how can we tell if they mean what they say? Again taking advantage of computer-assisted interviewing, Kuklinski and Cobb set out an imaginative experimental procedure capable of persuading respondents that they can express anger about matters of race without anyone, very much including the person interviewing them, being able to tell that is what they are doing. This procedure was devised by Kuklinski and

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[7] For a methodological discussion, see Piazza, Sniderman, and Tetlock (1989), and Sniderman and Grob (1996).

he and his colleagues have cross-validated it in a long series of studies: so here we want to say a word not about method but substance.

The first generation of research took it for granted that the problem of race, though surely not confined to the American South, was especially acute there. Over the last generation, the distinctiveness of the South is presumed to have disappeared. The politics of race is treated as essentially the same, in both character and extent, throughout the country. Indeed, on the public platform, the claim is made that the new South can be a model to the country as a whole in establishing cordial and candid relations between blacks and whites. Using their new procedure to measure racial sentiments unobtrusively, however, Kuklinski and Cobb throw an arresting light on the persisting distinctiveness of the South on matters of race.

Kathleen Knight's chapter, "In Their Own Words," offers counterpoint methodologically and substantively. Distinctively, she focuses on Americans' understanding, black as well as white, of why blacks remain worse off than whites when both are free to define the problem in the terms they think appropriate. It is worth underlining how pioneering a venture this is. A generation ago, the thematic analysis of open-ended responses was woven into the theoretical pattern of the seminal study of voting, The American Voter. It is difficult to think of a major work in survey research that has treated the original analysis of open-ended data as trump to take intellectual tricks since.[8] By demonstrating the power of computer-assisted interviewing to facilitate recording, retrieving, and coding verbatim responses, Knight's chapter contributes to the larger study's effort at innovation in measurement.

Substantive discovery is the test of methodological innovation, and Knight's analysis meets the burden of proof twice over. The standard public opinion survey relies entirely on respondents choosing between a small number of fixed alternatives formulated in advance. The alternatives, since they must be administered to everyone in the same way, must be not only comprehensible but also acceptable to everyone. There is thus a double loss, one well-recognized, the other not. The well-recognized loss is that there is no way to tell the alternatives citizens themselves would pose, if they were free to frame the alternatives they saw fit. The unrecognized loss is that there is no record of the actual words they would use to characterize these alternatives. The inevitable, if unintended, consequence is to give a sanitized impression of the real language in which many Americans talk about race. It is, accordingly, an important service of Knight to make vivid how explicit, coarse, and demeaning the public language of a significant number of white Americans remains.

In addition, by virtue of assaying the racial beliefs of whites in their own words, Knight has illuminated an important aspect of their thinking until now hidden from sight. About one-half of white

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[8] One distinguished exception, we would note, is the work of John Zaller and Stanley Feldman on ambivalence. See Zaller (1992) and Zaller and Feldman (1992).

Americans, she notes, "locate responsibility for the current state of affairs beyond the control of individual black people." More than one construction can be placed on this. Are they reporting a judgment they have reached themselves? Or saying not what they think but what they think they should say? But under either construction, as she remarks, it is "a finding worthy of some celebration;" worthy of celebration because what respondents say about a problem, when they are free to say (or avoid saying) whatever they wish, carries an extra measure of conviction.

A final word. The specific problem that Gilens addresses is the sources of resistance to welfare programs—that is, means-tested policies to assist the worst-off. On their face, these programs are race-neutral. Being black is neither a condition for receiving assistance from welfare, nor an explicit justification for it. Nonetheless, Gilens argues, it is deeply permeated by race. Poverty itself, he suggests, has become symbolic of race: poor Americans, in the eyes of white Americans, are overwhelmingly taken to be black Americans; and so, ostensibly offering their opinion on one subject, namely, what government should do in behalf of those who are badly off, whites actually are expressing their views on another, namely, how they feel about blacks who are benefiting from government assistance.

Gilen's argument, advanced on the standard fare of correlational data, would be plausible but not compelling. Whites may dislike welfare because they do not think well of blacks. But, alternatively, they may dislike welfare because they do not think well of those who have failed to make a success of their lives, whether they are black or white. Taking advantage of the power of randomization, not in the measurement of the dependent variable—the customary approach—but in the assessment of the independent variable, Gilens decisively demonstrates that in the minds of whites welfare has a black face.

Conclusion

The studies gathered here share a concern to concentrate attention on prejudice itself, to highlight the contingency of political judgments, and to promote innovation. Because of both how, and how well, they have been done, we believe that all the studies gathered here illuminate aspects of American racial attitudes hitherto not visible.

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