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Author(s): Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro

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Southern Racial Attitudes: Conflict, Awareness, and Political Change

By DONALD R. MATTHEWS and JAMES W. PROTHRO *

ABSTRACT: Differences in racial attitudes between southern whites and Negroes are extreme and intensely felt. As southern Negroes become more militant and politically powerful, and as the national government intervenes more vigorously in their behalf, the consensus within the two races and conflict between them produce problems for which the normal processes of compromise and accommodation are largely inoperative. The majority of neither race correctly perceives the attitudes of the other. Negro opposition to segregation is unlikely to change, and pressure from the rest of the nation is unlikely to diminish. The attitudes of white southerners are gradually being altered. In the "peripheral" South, the greater awareness by whites of Negro discontent, the existence of a significant minority of white moderates, and the growing number of Negro voters make the accommodation of racial conflict politically possible. In the deep South, white awareness of Negro opinion and the number of white moderates and Negro voters are too small at present to permit white politicians to compromise. But forces within the South and from outside seem to be working in that direction.

Donald R. Matthews, Ph.D., Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of the Political Studies Program, University of North Carolina. He previously taught at Smith College. He is author of The Social Background of Political Decision-Makers (1954), U. S. Senators and Their World (1960), and of articles and reviews on American politics and political behavior.

James W. Prothro, Ph.D., Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is Professor of Political Science and Research Professor in the Institute for Research in Social Science, University of North Carolina. He previously taught at Florida State University. He is author of The Dollar Decade: Business Ideas in the 1920's (1954), coauthor of The Politics of American Democracy (1959), and a contributor to journals in political and social studies.

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ON most political issues, the range of opinion in the United States is narrow. Moreover, clear-cut commitments within this narrow range of difference are confined to a relatively small proportion of the total population. "Liberals" and "conservatives" may feel their differences strongly but, viewed in world-wide perspective, these differences are not great. And only about 12 per cent of American adults can be said to have anything approaching an identifiable ideology.¹ An absence of extremism is one of the most important and pervasive characteristics of American political life. Politics in the United States is no grand clash of "isms," but a contest for short-run and limited objectives between contenders who usually agree on larger matters.²

Perhaps the main exception to this generalization is provided by the South today. First of all, the dominant racial attitudes within the former Confederate States differ sharply from those of the rest of the nation. While regional differences in attitude and behavior are fading in other areas of policy, the South remains highly distinctive on all questions concerning civil rights for Negroes. The consequences of this fact for national politics are hard to overestimate.

Second, despite the South's distinctiveness, the range of racial attitudes within the South is also great. The differences between a Martin Luther King and a James O. Eastland are extremely wide, concern the very foundations of southern social and political

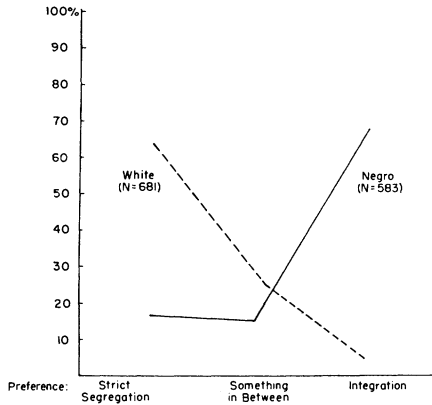
life, and are intensely felt by most southerners. In the past, this awesome gap could safely be ignored. The white man ran the South in his own way, and the rest of the nation was not disposed to do anything about it. Today, although still very much the subordinate caste, the Negro in the South is more militant and politically powerful than at any time since Reconstruction. It is safe to assume that southern Negroes will press their claim for equality with increasing effectiveness in the years ahead. It is also safe to assume that they will receive increasing aid and comfort from the rest of the nation. In international politics, the United States seeks to lead an increasingly nonwhite world. In domestic politics, the heavy migration of Negroes to northern cities has made the Negro vote of such importance that our national parties and politicians cannot afford to be "soft" on the question of civil rights. Federal intervention—"meddling by outsiders" in the southern white's phrase—will continue to grow so long as these conditions hold or until such time as the southern Negro achieves political and social equality. The racial attitudes of both whites and Negroes in the South are, therefore, of importance today.

In analyzing racial attitudes in the South, we shall begin by describing the distribution of opinions on segregation among Negroes and whites. Then we shall explore the prospects for change in racial attitudes and in awareness of the attitudes of others. Finally, we shall consider expectations for the future, both as expressed directly by southerners themselves and as suggested by our analysis. Our findings are based on interviews with both Negroes and whites chosen by strict probability methods from all citizens of voting age living in private house-

¹ The University of Michigan Survey Research Center reports that 2.5 per cent of all adults respond to politics in terms of "ideology" and 9 per cent in terms of "near ideology." See Angus Campbell and Others, *The American Voter* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1960), p. 249.

² See Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1955).

TABLE 1—SOUTHERNER'S PREFERENCES ON INTEGRATION-SEGREGATION



holds in the eleven former Confederate States.³

SOUTHERN VIEWS ON INTEGRATION-SEGREGATION

When asked by members of their own race whether they are "in favor of strict segregation, integration, or something in between," a vast majority (64 per cent) of southern whites express a preference for strict segregation, and a slightly greater majority (65 per cent) of southern Negroes say they prefer integration. When the distribution of preferences is presented graphically, as in Table 1, the deep-seated nature of white and Negro differences in the South emerges dramatically. On the question of segregation, the southern population is divided into two virtually solid groups, with massive support of whites for segregation and of Negroes for integration. Perhaps the most startling aspect of this division is that Negroes support integration as solidly as whites support segregation. With whites firmly established in the superordinate position in southern society, Negroes are under

³ All interviews were conducted by professional interviewers of the same race as the respondent.

great pressure to accept the dominant white values. While these values have been accepted in many areas—from cosmetics to religion—Negroes have not succumbed to the pressure to accept the white image of proper race relations.

On most policy questions, one expects to find a sizable portion of the citizenry to have no opinion, and this is especially the case in a region of relatively low education such as the South. But, on the question of integration or segregation, only one per cent of the whites and four per cent of the Negroes give a "don't know" response. Not only are there few Negroes and whites in the South who agree with each other on segregation, but there are also few people without opinions. Moreover, these opinions appear to be intensely held. In addition to the tendency of most policy questions to evoke a number of "don't know" responses, many people tend to choose "in between" rather than extreme positions. Despite the fact that our question wording used the term "*strict* segregation," only 28 per cent of the whites and 14 per cent of the Negroes took the "in between" position.

This southern system of public opinion on race relations gives leaders of each race a minimum of maneuverability. Outside the South, the fact of moderate opinions and of indifference affords a cushion of ambiguity which permits leaders to act. Compromises can be effected without certain knowledge of what the popular response will be—or even that any response will be forthcoming. In the South, the white leader who contemplates a tentative step toward accommodating Negro wishes can expect to be branded a "nigger-lover"; the Negro who cooperates with white leaders may be denounced as an "Uncle Tom." Indeed, one may seriously wonder

whether a viable political system in the South would be possible, granted the extreme bipolarization of opinion, without one of the opposed groups being dominated by the other.

MISINFORMATION AND PROJECTION

The extreme differences between Negro and white opinions on segregation pose an enormous barrier to the normal operation of democratic processes within the South. In view of the strength of the differences, one would have to be wildly optimistic to expect them to disappear within the near future. But—without agreement on the basic values involved—southerners have at least some chance of minimizing the difficulties presented by the cleavage if they are well aware of its existence. Knowledge of the views that divide southerners along racial lines would appear to be the first requirement for any enduring solution of the “race problem.”

How well aware are white and Negro southerners of the differences that divide the races on the question of segregation? Most nonsoutherners would probably assume that neither race could exist in the midst of such strongly divergent opinions without being aware of their existence. And they might be joined by social scientists: survey data have revealed a reasonable measure of success among citizens who are asked to estimate the position of various groups on questions that divide the groups less sharply and about which they have less intense opinions. But other findings leave open the possibility that southerners might actually be ill-informed about their differences. In the first place, communication flows across caste lines in a highly imperfect fashion; hence, one or both races may receive inaccurate impressions of the preferences of the other. In the second place, selec-

tive perception, through which an individual's perceptions of the views of others are influenced by his own values, may lead to distortion of information that is communicated. These are mutually reinforcing phenomena in public opinion, and southern race relations is a ripe field for the operation of both.

Table 2 indicates that, regardless of the overwhelming preference of Negroes for integration and of whites for strict segregation, neither group can correctly estimate the views of the other. Although both races are misinformed, the estimates of whites are much more inaccurate than those of Negroes. Only 22 per cent of the whites recognize that most Negroes favor integration, but 47 per cent of the Negroes recognize that most whites favor segregation. The greater inaccuracy of whites can also be seen by a comparison of the proportion of whites who say that “less than half” or “practically none” of the Negroes prefer integration with the proportion of Negroes who perceive equally small numbers of whites as favoring segregation. Such grossly inaccurate estimates occur among whites at twice the rate that they do among Negroes. The greater frequency of “don't know” responses among whites than among Negroes is a more direct expression of the relative lack of information among whites.

The great inaccuracy of whites in estimating the views of Negroes is not surprising. Inaccurate information about the views of the subordinate group may be viewed as one of the prices the superordinate group must pay for a repressive social system. Or, rather than viewing misinformation as a liability, one could say that the communication process permits the dominant group the luxury of ignorance about the wishes of those who are

TABLE 2—SOUTHERN WHITE AND NEGRO
ESTIMATES OF THE OTHER RACE'S ATTITUDES
ON SEGREGATION AND INTEGRATION

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF WHITE STRICT SEGREGATIONISTS OR OF NEGRO INTEGRATIONISTS	NEGRO ESTIMATES OF WHITE OPINION	WHITE ESTIMATES OF NEGRO OPINION
All	21%	4%
Most	26	18
About half	21	21
Less than half	20	39
Practically none	0	1
Don't know, refusal, no members of other race in area	12	17
Total	100%	100%
N	(615)	(685)

dominated. The percentage of Negroes who favor integration actually exceeds the percentage of whites who favor strict segregation. But the communication of Negro views is blocked in various ways. In almost all forms of activity in the South, Negroes are required by law to behave in conformity to segregationist values, whatever their opinions. Negroes in some localities may be afraid to express their dissatisfaction. In some cases, behavioral conformity may not be enough; white employers may elicit assurances from their Negro employees that they prefer segregation. Although the pressures from the dominant white majority have not been successful in molding Negro opinions, then, they have been successful in inducing many Negroes to refrain from expressing those opinions—or even to express contrary opinions—in contacts with local whites.

Southern Negroes, on the other hand, live under a system of segregation that is a constant institutional reminder of the segregationist beliefs of the white majority. Local police and judges stand ready to correct any misperception on which Negroes begin to act. How, then, can we explain the fact that only a minority of southern Negroes—

albeit a very large minority—recognize that most southern whites favor strict segregation? The answer must lie in selective perception. Their personal preference for integration must lead southern Negroes to underestimate the degree of white hostility to integration, despite the conspicuous evidence to the contrary. Selective perception characterizes whites as well, as Table 3 demonstrates. White integrationists are three times more likely than segregationists, and twice as likely as those in between, correctly to perceive the portion of Negroes favoring integration. It is easier, then, for white integrationists correctly to perceive Negro preferences, not necessarily because they are better informed but because they hold the same preferences.

The opinions of Negroes similarly tend to influence their estimates of the other race's preferences, although to a less extreme degree. Over half the Negro segregationists recognize that all or most whites also prefer segregation, whereas somewhat less than half of the Negro integrationists make such an accurate estimate. But this contrast

TABLE 3—PERCENTAGE OF SOUTHERN WHITES
AND NEGROES AWARE OF OTHER RACE'S AT-
TITUDES ON SEGREGATION AND INTEGRA-
TION, BY RACIAL ATTITUDE*

RESPONDENT'S RACIAL ATTITUDE	NEGRO AWARENESS OF WHITE OPINION	WHITE AWARENESS OF NEGRO OPINION
Strict segregation	53% (94)	18% (443)
Something in-between	44% (89)	25% (194)
Integration	47.5% (400)	50% (44)

* The percentages in the first column indicate the portion of Negroes with a given racial attitude who say that "all" or "most" whites favor strict segregation; the second column percentages indicate the portion of whites with a given racial attitude who say that "all" or "most" Negroes favor integration. Figures in parentheses are the numbers on which the percentages are based.

(53 per cent to 47.5 per cent) is not nearly so great as that between white integrationists and white segregationists (50 per cent to 18 per cent). Just as the pattern of communication in the South leaves the superordinate group as a whole less informed about the other race's aspirations, so does it permit them greater freedom to project their own views to others. From the Negro's vantage point, however, there is little ambiguity about the preferences of whites. The harsh realities of segregation set bounds within which there is little room for selective perception.

CRACKS IN THE "SOLID SOUTH"

The prospects for change in southern politics and race relations would appear to lie primarily in white attitudes. If centuries of suppression have converted only a small minority of Negro southerners to acceptance of a segregated status, we can find little reason to expect that today's milder forms of suppression will accomplish the task. For the remainder of this essay, we shall accordingly focus on the prospects for change in white attitudes and perceptions. By identifying the characteristics of the strict segregationists, moderates (those who say they favor "something in between"), and integrationists, and considering the prospects for an increase or decrease in the incidence of these characteristics, we should be able better to evaluate the possibility of change in underlying attitudes.

Numerous studies have shown that racial prejudice and discrimination tend to be related to low levels of formal education. If southern segregationist sentiments are linked to the low educational levels of the region, then a continued increase in the average schooling of southerners could be expected to lead to a basic modification of attitudes. The importance of education

for racial attitudes is clearly demonstrated by the findings in Table 4. The proportion of whites who are strict segregationists decreases with every increase in formal education. Whites with no more than grammar school education are *eight times* more likely than those with postgraduate college training to be strict segregationists. But a careful examination of the findings suggests that they are no basis for an expectation of large-scale change in southern attitudes within the near future. The combined number of moderates and integrationists does not exceed the number of strict segregationists within any educational level below completion of college—and only 8 per cent of the southern whites have a college degree. Although the proportion of college graduates in the region will certainly continue to increase, it will not soon move from 8 per cent to a majority of the population. Education decreases dedication to strict segregation, but extremely high levels of education are apparently necessary to produce actual acceptance of integration. Even among those whose formal education terminated with a college degree, only 14 per cent favor integration. To find substantial support for integration, one must look to those with graduate school training—and these "egg heads" constitute not quite 3 per cent of the white adults of the South.⁴

We would be going too far if we were to assume that a majority of southern whites would have to hold college degrees before increased education could significantly modify southern racial patterns. More modest increases in the general level of education in the South could have some effect. The whites with incomplete college training are evenly divided between strict

⁴ Of this 3 per cent, almost half grew up outside the South.

TABLE 4—LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND RACIAL ATTITUDES OF WHITE SOUTHERNERS

AMOUNT OF SCHOOLING	RACIAL ATTITUDE				
	Strict Segregation	In-Between	Integration	Don't Know, Refusal, No Answer	Total
0-6 years	89%	9	0	2	100% (91)
Junior high school	75%	19	3	3	100% (114)
Incomplete high school	70%	26	1	3	100% (95)
Complete high school	66%	30	3	1	100% (152)
Complete high school plus other (non-college) training	54%	36	8	2	100% (61)
Some college	50%	36	14	0	100% (108)
Complete college	41%	45	14	0	100% (49)
College and postgraduate training	11%	47	42	0	100% (19)
					(698)

segregationists and those with moderate or integrationist views. Such a division, even though it includes only a small portion of integrationists, could certainly be expected to produce a different pattern of politics. With more and more whites going beyond high school training, then, the size of the strict segregationist majority can be expected to decrease.

In addition to formal schooling, the informal education that comes from exposure to different racial customs may be viewed as a potential source of change. As southerners share in the increasing geographical mobility of all Americans, will their exposure to integrated public facilities elsewhere weaken or reinforce their dedication to the peculiar institutions of the South? White southerners who have been outside the South are much more likely than those who have never left the region to believe in integration or moderate segregation. Indeed, not a single integrationist was found among respondents who have never been outside the South. And, the farther the individual has been from the South, the more likely he is to have attitudes atypical for the region. Geographical mobility presumably means exposure to different

customs, and such exposure apparently modifies the values of southerners. The more foreign the exposure, the more likely the modification.

Either of two possibilities might render these inferences invalid. First, travel may be associated with some other characteristic, such as high education, in such a way that education rather than travel would turn out to be the real source of the link between travel and nonsegregationist views. Second, self-selection may lie behind the apparent effect of travel; those who hold southern views least strongly may be most inclined to travel outside the region.

An examination of the relationship between formal schooling and travel reveals that people with more education are, as suspected, much more widely traveled than those with less education. But this does not necessarily mean that travel itself has no independent influence on racial attitudes. When we make our comparisons between people with the same amount of education, as in Table 5, the strength of the relationship between travel and racial attitudes is decreased, but it by no means disappears. At every level of education, those who

have been outside the South are less likely to be strict segregationists than those who have never left the region.

Although Table 5 shows that geographical mobility has an independent effect on racial attitudes when education "is partialled out," it also reinforces our confidence in the importance of formal education itself. The difference between those with high and low education is greater, regardless of the amount of their travel, than the difference between the well-traveled and the nontraveled, regardless of the amount of their education. Moreover, the nature of the response to travel varies according to the level of one's education. At every level of education, greater mobility means a decrease in strict segregationist views, but only for those with high education does the shift accrue primarily to the benefit of integrationist beliefs. For those at the low or medium level of education the shift is to a moderate position between strict segregation and integration. Just as increasing white education holds out the prospect of a decrease in segregationist attitudes, so does the increasing mobility of white southerners reinforce and add to that prospect. Again,

however, the prospect is for an increase in moderate views rather than for an early conversion to integrationist values.

The relationship between geographical mobility and racial attitudes does not disappear when we control for the important third variable, education. But what about the self-selection problem—the possibility that those with nonsegregationist values choose to travel rather than that those who travel modify their values? A simple test of this possibility seems to be offered by the fact that involuntary travel in the armed services has been a common experience for the present generation of adult American males. If travel while in the armed services modifies racial sentiments, we can fairly safely reject the possibility that our findings are a result of the self-selection process. Again the data support the inference that exposure to nonsouthern customs has an independent effect on racial attitudes: the percentage of veterans favoring integration increases from 0 to 7 to 11 as the locus of service shifts from the South only to the United States outside the South to the world beyond the United States. But the ef-

TABLE 5—GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY AND RACIAL ATTITUDES OF WHITE SOUTHERNERS, WITH EDUCATION CONTROLLED

RACIAL ATTITUDE	FARTHEST PLACE RESPONDENT HAS BEEN											
	Outside North America			Outside U.S.A.			Outside South			Within South		
	Education*			Education*			Education*			Education*		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Strict segregation	71%	54%	35%	57%	46%	45%	72%	60%	46%	89%	86%	57%
In-between	22	38	41	29	42	45	25	35	36	8	14	43
Integration	5	8	24	5	8	10	1	4	18	0	0	0
Don't know, Refusal, No answer	2	0	0	9	4	0	2	1	0	3	0	0
Total N	100% 41	100% 39	100% 58	100% 21	100% 24	100% 31	100% 119	100% 106	100% 72	100% 117	100% 43	100% 14

* Low education means less than completion of high school; medium, completion of high school but no college training; high, at least some college training.

fect of travel in the service is confined to increasing the proportion of integrationists at the expense of the proportion of moderates. The proportion of strict segregationists among southern veterans is the same regardless of where they served. Travel in the service is less important than the fact of service itself for the percentage favoring strict segregation. Only 55 per cent of all white veterans in the South favor strict segregation, as compared with 63 per cent of all adult white males and 65 per cent of all adult white females in the region. We conclude not only that self-selection does not account for all of the effect of travel on racial attitudes but also that military service itself—a largely nonvoluntary act—may decrease dedication to segregation.

We have identified three factors—education, geographical mobility, and armed service experience—which appear (in diminishing order of importance) to decrease segregationist sentiment. Increasing numbers of southern whites have been exposed to all three types of experience, and more of all three—certainly of the first two—may reasonably be expected for the future. Granted the great importance of formal education, and the fact that each new generation receives more schooling, we may expect young white southerners to be less committed than their elders to segregation. Moreover, studies in other populations have consistently found that conservatism—in the sense of accepting ethnic and other group norms—increases with age. But the relationship between age and the racial attitudes of white southerners does not correspond to these expectations. If the young adults of the South represent the hope of the future, they may be the hope of the strict segregationists rather than of anyone else.

Rather than a steady increase in

segregationist sentiment with advancing years, the proportion of strict segregationists declines as we move from the youngest white southern citizens, in their late teens and twenties, through those in their thirties and forties. Only with the fifty-year-old group does the percentage begin to ascend, to reach a high point with those in their sixties and seventies. The percentage of strict segregationists within each age group of southern whites is:

18 to 29—	65%
30 to 39—	60
40 to 49—	59
50 to 59—	64
60 to 69—	70
70+	—68

The great commitment of the very old to segregation is, of course, in keeping with expectations created by the normally conservative effect of aging. But the greater adherence to strict segregation of the very young than of those in their thirties and forties deserves examination. It is the more impressive in view of the fact that more people have a high level of education in the youngest group than in any other.⁵ Because of their greater schooling, an equal proportion of strict segregationists among the very young would have been mildly surprising; the slightly greater proportion that was found therefore has more importance than the size of the difference would suggest. When we hold education constant and confine the comparison of age groups to people with the same amount of education, the youngest southern whites include more segregationists than the middle-age groups at every level of education. Indeed, within the

⁵ The proportion of each age group in the "high education" category is: 18 to 29—35%; 30 to 39—30%; 40 to 49—26%; 50 to 59—18%; 60 to 69—22%; 70 and over—16%.

low and medium education categories, the largest percentage of strict segregationists is found in the 18 to 29 age group, and, within the high education category, only those over 60 years of age include more strict segregationists than the very young.

Why do more restrictive racial views turn up among the very young than among those in early middle age? Three factors contribute to the difference: more southern whites in their thirties and forties were brought up outside the South, more of them have served in the armed forces, and more have been exposed by travel to non-southern customs. Another factor may be the *nature* of the greater education to which the youngest age group has been exposed. These people were between the ages of eleven and twenty-two at the time of the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision in 1954. Since the "black Monday" of that decision, white youths in the South may have been subjected to a more concentrated indoctrination in the merits of segregation.

The characteristics of southern whites as individuals hold out some prospect for change in racial attitudes, with the modest nature of the prospect underscored by the high proportion of young citizens who are strict segregationists. If we turn from changing attributes of individuals to the changing nature of their environment, we again find grounds for an expectation of a gradual decrease in segregationist sentiment among whites. Larger proportions of strict segregationists are found among people in rural areas than in urban areas, among people who grew up in counties with a large concentration of Negroes than in counties with fewer Negroes, and in the states of the "deep South" (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina) than in the states of the "peripheral

South" (Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia). In each case, the community characteristic associated with more segregationist sentiment is on the wane. In the South today, the urban population is growing faster than the rural population, the proportion of Negroes in the population is declining, and the population of the peripheral South is growing much faster than that of the deep South. Such changes will affect attitudes only slowly, but the direction of the effect should be toward moderate or integrationist views.

PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE IN WHITE AWARENESS

The prospects for change in white racial attitudes seem to be fairly good only if one takes a very long-run view. But Negro leaders make it abundantly clear that they are not willing to wait for slow processes to erode segregation in the long run. The hope of earlier action within a viable democratic system would appear to depend on a change in white perceptions of the nature of Negro demands. Even if the dominant group does not agree with the demands of a sizable faction in its midst, its members may respond to those demands *if they know what they are*. But only a minority of southern whites (22 per cent) recognize the deep-seated resentment Negroes feel toward segregation. Are their characteristics such as to suggest any early recognition by whites of the nature of Negro demands?

To begin with, we must face the possibility that correct information on Negro attitudes is simply one manifestation of a generally superior level of information. Respondents were asked seven factual questions about politics, with simple enough questions to provide a substantial number of correct re-

TABLE 6—PERCENTAGE OF WHITE SOUTHERNERS AWARE* OF NEGRO RACIAL ATTITUDES, BY RACIAL ATTITUDE AND EDUCATION

WHITE RACIAL ATTITUDES	WHITE EDUCATION		
	Low	Medium	High
Strict segregation	29%	29%	27%
In-between	45%	41%	37%
Integration	**	**	89%
N	173	134	111

* The view that "all" or "most" Negroes favor integration is counted as "aware"; the view that "less than half" or "practically none" favor integration is scored as incorrect. Other responses—"about half," "don't know"—and failures to respond are excluded from this and subsequent tabulations related to white awareness of Negro racial attitudes.

** Too few cases for percentaging.

sponses.⁶ When the results are analyzed with the racial views of the respondents held constant, general political information is found to have no relation to awareness of Negro racial attitudes.⁷ Among the strict segregationists, those who are ignorant of Negro preferences actually have slightly higher general-information scores than those who are aware of Negro attitudes. Among the moderates, the difference is reversed, but in both cases the differences are minute. Although we may expect

⁶ The information questions were: (1) Do you happen to recall whether President Franklin Roosevelt was a Republican or a Democrat? [Which?] (2) Who is the governor of (name of state) now? (3) About how long a term does the governor serve? (4) What is the county seat of (name of county respondent lives in) County? (5) About how many years does a United States Senator serve? (6) Do you happen to know about how many members there are on the United States Supreme Court? [How many?] (7) What are the last two states to come into the United States?

⁷ The mean score for each group of southern whites was: strict segregationists aware of Negro attitudes, 4.4; strict segregationists unaware, 4.5; moderates aware, 5.2; moderates unaware, 4.9; integrationists aware, 5.3.

modern modes of communication to raise the general informational level of southern whites, then, such an improvement will apparently have no direct effect on white perceptions of Negro attitudes. If we look at level of formal schooling rather than at level of political information, the sense of stability in white misperceptions is even stronger. Table 6 reveals that, with white racial views held constant, more education makes no contribution at all to greater white awareness of Negro attitudes. Indeed, for strict segregationists there is a slight decrease in awareness as education goes up, and for moderates, a fairly sizable decrease. The assumption that white perceptions of Negro demands might be changed more quickly than white attitudes gets no support from these findings.

If white ignorance of Negro attitudes does not stem directly from lack of information or education, perhaps it results simply from lack of contact with Negroes. The most common form of close contact between whites and Negroes in the South is in an employer-employee relationship, but contact with Negroes as employees is associated with a lower level of awareness of Negro attitudes when we compare whites with the same racial attitudes. Because the employer-employee relationship places the Negro in the familiar role of subordination, one might expect greater white contact with Negro employees to be predictive of inaccurate views of Negro attitudes. Contact with Negroes as fellow shoppers is probably the type of association in the contemporary South most nearly akin to contact in the use of integrated public facilities. But, again, whites with a given racial attitude are less likely to be aware of Negro attitudes if they report contacts with Negroes as fellow shoppers than if they report no such contacts.

Like education and information, contact with Negroes does not contribute directly to white awareness of Negro attitudes. The effect of travel and of army service on white awareness, when preference is controlled, is similarly nonexistent or unimpressive. Ironically, each of these factors *does* contribute directly to more moderate or integrationist sentiment. Contrary to our expectations, white misperceptions of Negro preferences may be as hard to change as white attitudes themselves.

The general conditions under which whites may come to awareness of Negro attitudes are suggested by the contrast in awareness between whites in the deep South and in the peripheral South. This is the only variable we have examined in this essay that serves, in clear independence of white preferences, to increase awareness of Negro preferences. Among strict segregationists, 32 per cent in the peripheral South compared to 22 per cent in the deep South realize that Negroes prefer integration (see Table 7). And the difference between moderates in the two subregions is slightly greater. The peripheral South contains a much larger proportion of moderates and integrationists than the deep South, but these are differences between people with the same personal preferences.

The greater ability of whites in the peripheral South to recognize the preference of most Negroes for integration appears to be supported by three factors, all of which are important for the future race relations and politics of the South. First, more of the Negroes in the peripheral South than in the deep South actually do prefer integration. The difference is not great (68 per cent to 60 per cent), but it is large enough to say that the actual situation in the peripheral South should call forth more white estimates that most Negroes prefer integration. Despite this difference,

the fact remains that most Negroes, even in the deep South, are integrationists. A second factor underlying the subregional difference in awareness is that Negroes in the peripheral South are more articulate about their opinions. With more Negroes voting, often supported by active and efficient political organizations, and with public and private expressions of discontent over segregation, the muting effects of the deep South's pressures for conformity are decreased. Even whites who are appalled at Negro demands may be forced at least to recognize that the demands exist. Finally, the whites in the peripheral South are not nearly as close to consensus on segregation as those in the deep South. With a large minority of fellow whites rejecting strict segregation, even the strongest segregationist may be forced to recognize that Negroes must also reject segregation.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

What, then, does the future hold for race relations and politics in the South?

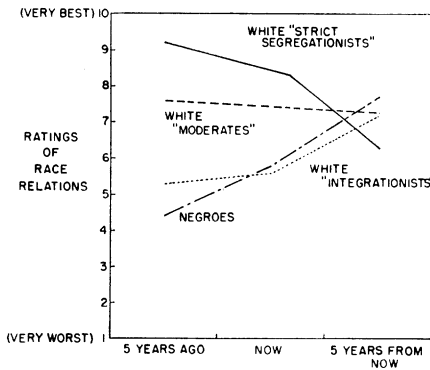
Paradoxically, Negro and white

TABLE 7—PERCENTAGE OF WHITE SOUTHERNERS AWARE OF NEGRO RACIAL ATTITUDES, BY RACIAL ATTITUDE AND SUBREGION OF RESIDENCE

RACIAL ATTITUDES OF WHITES	SUBREGION OF RESPONDENTS' RESIDENCE*	
	Deep South	Peripheral South
Strict segregation	22%	32%
In-between	31%	42%
Integration	—	88%
N	105	315

* The deep South consists of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. The peripheral South is defined as Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

TABLE 8—MEAN RATINGS OF RACE RELATIONS BY NEGROES AND WHITE "STRICT SEGREGATIONISTS," "MODERATES," AND "INTEGRATIONISTS"



southerners more nearly agree on this question than on any other we have examined in this essay. Each respondent in our survey was asked to locate the race relations in his community on a ten-step ladder, with the "very best" kind of race relations he could imagine represented by 10 and the "very worst" by 1. Having rated present race relations, he was then asked where on the ladder he would have put the race relations of his community "five years ago" and where he expected it to be "five years from now."

The results of this undertaking are presented in Table 8. The strict segregationist majority among the southern whites has the most idyllic image of the past and the greatest sense of doom for the future. White integrationists, on the other hand, join the Negroes in low ratings of southern race relations for the past and present and in high expectations for the future. White moderates occupy a position between the extreme segregationist whites and the Negroes at every point in time, being more satisfied with the past and present than Negroes and more optimistic about the future than strict segregationist whites.

Because these ratings are based on a scale in which each respondent defines his own "best" and "worst" race relations, they are impressive testimony to one form of consensus that characterizes all southern groups—agreement that the South is moving from segregation to integration. Only a small minority of whites join the vast majority of Negroes in approving of the change. But, in view of the degree to which personal preference conditions estimates of the other race's views on segregation, consensus on the direction of movement, whether defined as progress or as retrogression, represents no mean achievement. White segregationists may blame the course of events on "outside agitation" or an unfriendly national government, but they at least recognize where events are leading.

Granted the extreme divergences of Negro and white values on segregation, the ignorance of each group of the preferences of the other, and the anticipated demise of segregation, what are the chances for the maintenance of a democratic political system in the South? If men must "agree on fundamentals" before they "safely can afford to bicker," then the increasingly biracial politics of the South will be stormy indeed in the years ahead. It may well be that such a deeply felt and basic conflict cannot be resolved without resort to such massive violence that a "new Reconstruction" would inevitably follow—for federal troops are the only realistic alternative to political accommodation.

But recent research suggests that consensus on fundamentals may not be as necessary to the operation of a democratic political system as it is often thought to be.⁸ In the first place, the

⁸ See Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), especially chap. 28; James W. Prothro and Charles M. Grigg, "Fundamental Principles

leaders of competing groups in other political systems seem to have a more conscious dedication to democratic procedures than their followers. Although our survey does not provide systematic data on this point, we believe this to be the case among the leaders of the two races in the South. In the second place, apathy on the part of the mass of citizens in other political systems provides an element of slack within which leaders are relatively free to adjust differences. This benign apathy scarcely exists among southern whites. And both the political indifference of Negroes, induced by centuries of segregation, and the legal and extralegal barriers to Negro participation are diminishing. Negroes have an even greater stake in the segregation controversy than whites. Over the long haul, the essential slack is not likely to come either from apathy or from enforced nonparticipation. Only a significant change in the racial attitudes of white southerners can insure the survival of political democracy in the region.

This does not mean that all white southerners must become wholehearted advocates of racial integration. It does mean that the present consensus of white southerners on racial policies must be weakened. A fairly sizable minority

of white moderates and integrationists, when joined with a larger group of Negro political activists, can make it feasible for white politicians to "give in" to pressures from the federal government and to bargain and compromise with Negro spokesmen without committing political suicide in the process.

This kind of race politics already exists in most of the peripheral South, where there are appreciably more white moderates and where even the strict segregationists are more likely to be aware of Negro preferences. Despite the fact that a majority of the white citizens—and politicians—strongly prefer segregation, genuine accommodations are being made democratically. The Negro activists believe that the rate of change is too slow, and a majority of the whites feel that it is in the wrong direction. So far, however, both would prefer to live with these frustrations than face the dimly recognized alternative. In the deep South, neither the critical minority of white moderates nor the large bloc of Negro voters is yet in being. But if the deep South is to join the union, these groups must develop sufficiently to make the accommodation of deep racial conflict politically feasible. The major thrust of our analysis is that the forces of change within the South, as well as pressures from outside, seem to be working in that direction.

of Democracy: Bases of Agreement and Disagreement," *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 22 (May 1960), pp. 276-284.