Social Trends in American Life

Findings from the General Social Survey since 1972

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The *Real* Record on Racial Attitudes

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> But the responsibility of the historian or sociologist who studies racism is not to moralize and condemn but to understand this malignancy so that it can be more effectively treated, just as a medical researcher studying cancer does not moralize about it but searches for knowledge that might point the way to a cure.
>
> —George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History*

Anyone serious about understanding American society must at some early point engage the problem of race and racial division. These have been prominent features of U.S. social organization and culture from about as far back as the historical record allows us to go. For this reason, distinguished historian Winthrop Jordan once wrote that he wished he could have been there in 1619 "questionnaire in hand" when the first "twenty Negars" arrived at Jamestown, Virginia (Jordan 1968, p. viii). He suggested that to understand how and why race had so profoundly shaped the development of the early United States, one had to understand the racial attitudes and beliefs of actors in those times. Jordan did not, however, have a time machine. He could not directly ask people about their attitudes and beliefs on race. Instead, he had to cull available records and writings to extract how race was understood.

Modern sociologists, however, are fortunate to have systematic, repeated social surveys that provide an unusually powerful tool for assessing change in our social and cultural fabric. The full attitudinal record on race from the General Social Survey (GSS) provides a rich and complex scientific resource for analyzing one of the fundamental bases of social organization and inequality in the United States, race and racial division (Massey 2007). Unlike even the most probing ethnography or handful of in-depth interviews, or the most complex and meticulously designed laboratory experiment, surveys represent large and important population groups in a fashion that allows for

rigorous multivariate analyses and hypothesis testing. Beyond these customary strengths of surveys, the GSS's repeated cross-sectional samples yield assessments of social change over a nearly 40-year time span (Davis, Smith, and Marsden 2008).[1]

Consistent with the thrust of eminent historian George Fredrickson's admonition in this chapter's epigraph, the GSS aims mainly to document and describe key features of racial attitudes in the United States; to allow scholars to pinpoint the social location of these views for such significant social attributes as age, level of education, region of the country, gender, and other factors; and, importantly, to trace patterns of change over time. No single conceptualization of racial attitudes, or racism more broadly, dominated the initial content of the GSS in this domain. With perfect hindsight, we see that its coverage of some key conceptual domains (e.g., racial stereotypes) was much thinner than it should have been (Quillian and Pager 2001). Over time, the GSS's approach to racial attitudes has changed, partly because of changes in larger social issues, partly because of empirical trends in the items measured, and partly in response to significant intellectual currents in the scientific community interested in racial attitudes. All of this is fundamentally how good, careful, empirically grounded science should develop (Lieberson 1992).

After a brief review of the pre-1972 record on racial attitudes, we organize our treatment of trends in racial topics into seven conceptual or subject areas. We first examine what Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo (1985) labeled "racial principles": basic rules that should guide black–white relations—in particular, whether the United States should be a society that segregates and openly discriminates on the basis of race, or one that is integrated and nondiscriminatory on the basis of race. The second category involves social distance feelings about potential hypothetical forms of social contact that cross the black–white divide in different domains of life (e.g., schools), often in different proportionate mixtures (i.e., majority-white settings versus majority-minority settings). The third area involves governmental policy initiatives to ameliorate racial inequality and discrimination (e.g., affirmative action). The fourth set concerns stereotypes, or beliefs about the behavioral traits and capacities of particular racial groups, while the fifth involves lay or causal explanations of racial inequality. Affective or socioemotional evaluations—that tap basic like-versus-dislike, or approach-versus-avoid reactions to members of other groups—constitute the sixth area. The final category involves collective resentments—the extent to which African Americans are perceived as trying to advance themselves unfairly by a different set of rules than those putatively followed by white Americans.

We view race as a social construction. Race, or, more generally, ethnoracial distinctions, is historically contingent and varies in exact configuration and salience over time. Such a base of social identity intersects with and is often importantly conditioned by other markers of social difference such as gender,

age, class, and sexuality. Although distinctions seen as racial typically invoke consideration of physical and biological markers like skin tone and color, hair texture, eye shape, and possibly other features, none of these lends race its social meaning or significance.

This chapter will, of necessity, disproportionately emphasize the views of white Americans and the black–white divide. This emphasis is due to the design of the GSS, not our theoretical choice or priority. The GSS design represents the English-speaking population of the United States as a whole, so there are many more white respondents than black (or Hispanic or Asian) ones in every GSS sample. Our main task is to report on social change with regard to whites' attitudes and beliefs on race. At several points we also report such trends among blacks. We occasionally report group comparisons, but the GSS only recently initiated repeated attitude series referring to Hispanics or Asians, severely constraining our capacity to trace change in a more multiracial context.

This chapter does not attempt exhaustive coverage of all topics that should be addressed by a more general summary of the literature on racial attitudes. For example, we devote little attention to racial attitudes as an influence on voting behavior or over the course of political campaigns (for excellent summaries see Callaghan and Terkildsen 2002; Hutchings and Valentino 2004; Valentino and Sears 2005; Lee 2008). Much important scholarly work on race has such a political focus (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Stoker 1996; Sears, Van Larr, Carrillo, and Kosterman 1997; Sniderman and Carmines 1997; Mendelberg 2001), but the GSS does not assess views at times proximate to major biennial national elections, nor does it focus centrally on electoral behavior.

Other topics have more immediate sociological relevance but too are largely beyond the scope of this review. We do not carefully consider the effects of actual minority group size (Fossett and Kiecolt 1989; Kinder and Mendelberg 1995; M. C. Taylor 1998; Dixon and Rosenbaum 2004; Dixon 2003; Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz 2005; Wong 2008) on racial attitudes; the impacts of urbanicity or of regional migration (Tuch 1987; Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997; Glaser and Gilens 1997; Weakliem and Biggert 1998; Carter, Steelman, Mulkey, and Borch 2005; T. C. Wilson 1985, 1986, 1991); or debates about gender effects on racial attitudes (Stack 1997; Johnson and Marini 1998; Hughes and Tuch 2003), nor do we examine race as an aspect of social tolerance and political and cultural polarization more broadly (Davis 2004; Downey 2000; Evans 2003; Mondak and Sanders 2003; Moore and Ovadia 2006; Persell, Green, and Gurevich 2001).

We do aim to map the major dimensions of, and trends in, U.S. racial attitudes as recorded by the GSS. We assess change within race and consider black–white differences in attitudes, and report more selectively on differences in attitudes by education, region, and age. The GSS is best suited to illu-

minate the fundamental and general problem of race as a sociological feature of larger social organization and culture, on which we will focus.

The attitudinal record assembled in the GSS provides a remarkably rich and sociologically important lens on race in the United States. These data vividly document both significant progressive changes regarding race, as well as substantial enduring frictions and conflicts that continue to make race such a fraught terrain. While the GSS does not tap every relevant nuance of a changing American racial divide, it does provide incredible scientific purchase on what has changed, what has not, and why. This conceptually broad and analytically powerful record is a strong caution against glib generalities that try to reduce an enormously multifaceted social phenomenon to simplistic catch phrases like "racist America," "the end of racism," or most recently "postracial America."

The Pre-1972 Record and the *Scientific American* Reports

Sociological interest in matters of racial attitudes, or what might be termed "prejudice," has a very long and distinguished history. Consideration of such questions dates back at least to W.E.B. DuBois and his pioneering work *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899), which treated racial prejudice as one organic and contextual factor structuring American society in general and racial inequality in particular (Bobo 2000). Other early sociologists such as Robert E. Park (1924) and Emory S. Bogardus (1928) focused attention on aspects of racial attitudes. Likewise, an ambitious background report on attitudes was prepared for Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal's (1944) massive two volume work *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy* (see Horowitz 1944).

Of greatest significance for the development of the racial items in the GSS, however, was a series of surveys first launched during World War II. Conducted under the auspices of what was once called the Office of War Information and fielded by NORC, national surveys in 1942 and 1944 sought to determine if racial divisions would impede a unified U.S. war effort. The first reports were, in fact, "classified" documents.

Spanning two decades, the *Scientific American* series of four articles on racial attitudes in America provides a positive report of national sentiment and expresses great optimism about the future direction of white racial attitudes toward blacks. These four documents, penned by Herbert H. Hyman, Paul B. Sheatsley, Andrew M. Greeley, and D. Garth Taylor, present a wealth of longitudinal data that provide a fundamental baseline for national surveys of racial attitudes in the United States.

The first *Scientific American* article, written by Hyman and Sheatsley, appeared in 1956. "Attitudes toward Desegregation" covers racially integrating schools, public transportation, and neighborhoods by families with the same

income and education. Examining the nation as a whole, Hyman and Sheatsley found that 60% of whites were willing to extend integration to transportation, 51% did not object to living near a black family of the same socioeconomic status, and 48% supported school integration. They also found more acceptance of integration among northerners, younger adults, and those with greater educational attainment. Comparing these findings to data collected during the 1940s, the authors found a steady trend toward more integrationist attitudes. Contributing to these gains were a growing belief that blacks and whites were equally intelligent and official institutional and legal actions eliminating segregation.

Hyman and Sheatsley released a second report in 1964, following events such as the school desegregation efforts in Little Rock, sit-ins, and the Oxford, Mississippi, riots. They asked if the subsequent tumultuous years had derailed the positive trends they found in 1956. Certainly the American public was acutely aware of these events; civil rights and race relations were mentioned more than any other issue as the most important problem facing the nation. Hyman and Sheatsley found that the tide of integrationist sentiments observed in 1956 had not only continued but in fact surged ahead in the South. Age, education, and region continued to be important determinants of racial attitudes. The authors also highlighted regional mobility, reporting that attitudes of southerners who formerly lived in the North tended to be more similar to their northern rather than southern counterparts. The 1964 report continued to express optimism for the future of racial attitudes, not only because of the positive attitude trends over time, but also because these gains resulted largely from segregationists becoming more open to integration over time.

Greeley and Sheatsley published the third entry in the series in 1971, one year before the GSS began. During the preceding seven years, riots, the Martin Luther King Jr. assassination, and rising black militancy had rocked the country. In the face of these historical events, Greeley and Sheatsley continued to have high hopes for Americans' racial attitudes, evidenced in a small but symbolic way by a change in the article's title from "Attitudes toward Desegregation" (as in 1956 and 1964), to "Attitudes toward Racial Integration" (also used in the fourth article). Their continuing optimism was buoyed by the fact that integrating transportation had been rendered a nonissue: 88% of the population rejected segregation in this area. Integration of schools remained problematic, however: a quarter of the population still supported separate schooling for whites and blacks.

Important methodological changes took place in the 1971 article. First, the sample pool expanded to include nonwhites (although they were omitted from the analysis). Second, newly collected information on respondents' ethnicity revealed little evidence of a distinctive pattern of racism among white ethnics. Differences in attitudes were also reported for groupings by religion, income level, occupation, gender, and population size of residential

area. Third, Greeley and Sheatsley included a new scale of racial attitudes. Questions concerning schooling, transportation, and neighborhoods were either retained or slightly modified, while items about integration of other public spaces, inviting a "Negro" guest home for dinner, intermarriage, and whether blacks should push where they are not wanted were added. Overall, the authors found a continued rise in prointegration sentiment, with the largest gains among groups that were previously the staunchest segregationists. Notably, however, one question revealed support for the then-popular claim that black militancy was producing a backlash among whites. While in 1963 a quarter of whites rejected the idea that blacks shouldn't push themselves where they are not wanted, by 1970 such acceptance of black activism fell by almost 10 points, to 16%.[2]

The final (1978) *Scientific American* article, which drew on early GSS data, was published by D. G. Taylor, Sheatsley, and Greeley. This report found a surge of integrationist sentiment between 1970 and 1972, particularly in the South. During the 1973–1978 period liberalism on racial issues continued to increase, but at a slower, albeit steady, pace. The authors noted that while part of the change in attitudes stemmed from the entry of new cohorts of younger respondents with more liberal outlooks, older Americans were also changing their beliefs. Furthermore, they asserted that liberalization on racial issues was part of a trend encompassing a range of related social issues.

Taken together, the *Scientific American* articles report a clear and unyielding rise in the expression of integrationist sentiment among the American public between the mid-1950s and the late 1970s. As the authors predicted, racial attitudes in the domains studied continued to liberalize after the period covered by their research. Key variables such as education, region, and age remained important predictors of racial attitudes.

Contemporary research differs from these important past studies in two interesting ways, however. Hyman, Sheatsley, Greeley, and Taylor were not concerned about the social desirability bias that often worries scholars today. In regard to respondent candor, the first report notes,

> There can be little doubt that on racial segregation people honestly expressed their deeply felt opinions. They were not at all reluctant to talk about the subject to interviewers, and they consistently showed a livelier interest in this topic than in almost any other public question on which people are polled. (Hyman and Sheatsley 1956, p. 37)

Second, rising numbers of "don't know" responses in surveys are of increasing concern to present-day researchers (Berinsky 1999, 2002; Forman 2004). Such responses may express ambivalence or be attempts to give socially acceptable answers. The *Scientific American* reports did not share these concerns: their "don't know" rate was never above 4%. This does not indicate an overall assuredness in opinion among midcentury survey respondents; on the contrary, "don't know" rates were 10% to 20% for the majority of questions

posed on other topics. Instead, Hyman and Sheatsley (1956, p. 37) stated that when it came to racial attitudes, "almost everyone knows exactly where he stands on the matter."

The Attitudinal Record

The GSS launched in 1972–1973 contained the 14 racial attitude questions shown in Table 3.1.[3] These items provide a snapshot of key attitudes in the United States at that time and a benchmark for viewing not only ensuing trends for these items, but responses to new questions introduced later. Most of the items measure either principles guiding race relations or social distance feelings. Only two were items on government policy, while we classify one as "miscellaneous." At this early stage, the survey did not cover racial stereotypes, explanations of racial inequality, affective orientations, or collective resentments. The latter type of question, very close in content to the question of whether blacks should "push themselves where they're not wanted," proves to be of great interpretative importance below.[4]

Seven patterns stand out in Table 3.1. First and foremost, even in 1972 endorsement by whites of segregation and open discrimination as principles guiding black–white relations had given way to preferred ideals of integration and equal treatment. Only 3% thought whites should have the "first chance" at a job, only roughly 1 in 10 (13%) endorsed separate schools, and just 1 in 4 (25%) said that they would not vote for a qualified black presidential candidate nominated by their own party. Second, the equal treatment responses for two items in this original 1972–1973 pool, about job access and neighbors of similar socioeconomic status, were endorsed at such high levels (97% and 87%, respectively) that these questions were not repeated after 1972. The repudiation of Jim Crow ideology as the guiding principle for black–white interaction, while not complete, was quite far-reaching.

Third, endorsement of integration seemed to reach beyond mere principle. Expressed openness to various forms of contact with blacks, be it a neighbor on the block, a few black children in a school, or even hosting a black dinner guest, was quite high. The principles seemed to imply more than just lofty goals, including ideals that might be put into practice in these more public and less intimate ways.

Fourth, sharp differences in outlook divided northerners from southerners, the highly from the poorly educated, and the young from the old. For example, only a third of northern whites endorsed the idea that whites have the right to keep blacks out of their neighborhood, compared to 53% of southern whites; only 24% of college educated whites endorsed this view, compared to 53% of those who had not completed high school; and only 26% of those age 18 to 33 endorsed whites' right to keep blacks out of a neighborhood, compared to 52% of those over age 50. These are all portentous trends. There were

Table 3.1. Whites' Responses to Racial Attitude Questions, GSS 1972–1973[a]

	National	Region		Education			Age		
		North	South	>12	12	13+	18–33	34–50	51+
Racial principles									
White first chances at jobs (RACJOB)	3	3	5	7	2	0.3	1	4	5
Blacks should go to separate schools (RACSHOL)	13	8	31	26	9	3	7	16	17
Not vote for black president (RACPRES)	25	18	48	36	22	15	16	24	35
Favor laws against intermarriage (RACMAR)	37	31	53	59	33	18	23	37	51
Right to segregate neighborhoods (RACSEG)	39	35	53	53	38	24	26	39	52
Home sellers can discriminate in sales (RACOPEN)	64	60	73	70	68	54	52	67	73
Social distance feelings									
Object to same SES black neighbor (RACOBJCT)	13	9	25	19	12	7	7	13	18
Object to school with few blacks (RACFEW)	7	4	16	12	5	3	4	6	11
Object to school with half blacks (RACHALF)	17	14	26	22	16	12	12	18	21
Object to school with mostly blacks (RACMOST)	41	41	45	38	43	44	40	45	40
Object to black dinner guest (RACDIN)	30	23	46	38	32	18	26	31	32
Government policy on race									
Opposes school busing (BUSING)	86	84	94	87	88	83	80	88	90
Too much spending on blacks (NATRACE)	26	22	34	33	26	19	20	28	30
Miscellaneous									
Blacks shouldn't push (RACPUSH)	74	71	83	81	75	58	61	76	84

[a]Values are the percentage supporting the intolerant response. N ranges between 960 and 2,583. GSS variable mnemonics in parentheses. Data are from the 1972 GSS, except for RACOPEN and NATRACE (1973).

good grounds to expect that the South would increasingly come to resemble the rest of the nation, that the highly educated would be thought leaders for the rest of the population, and that younger cohorts of individuals would gradually usher in more prointegration outlooks in this domain.

These four patterns constitute much of the case for a very optimistic interpretation of the tenor of U.S. racial attitudes in the early 1970s, as conveyed in the last *Scientific American* report. Three other noteworthy patterns, however, temper such optimism. First, the number or proportion of blacks in a social setting clearly mattered to most white respondents. Whites were much less willing to see their child(ren) attend a school where half of the other students were black. Their willingness dropped even further when asked about a majority-black school. This pattern demonstrates that whites were not blind or completely indifferent to race. It points to at least one manifestation of the durable importance of race. Nonetheless, it would be facile to interpret these results as racism. Resistance to being in a minority status, for instance, might well be found for religious (e.g., Catholic versus Jewish) or class-based social settings as well.

Second, it is telling that both items in the "government intervention" category reveal little white enthusiasm for government action to redress racial inequality. Fully 86% of white respondents rejected school busing as a tool for achieving school desegregation. Only about a quarter of white respondents thought the government was spending "too much" on assisting blacks, but most felt that such spending was already at the right level. Third, in 1972, 74% of whites nationwide agreed that "blacks should not push themselves" where they are not wanted. Despite broad acceptance of principles of equality, then, whites were reluctant to endorse actions challenging the status quo.

This snapshot portrait in 1972–1973 is telling and much more nuanced than that frequently assumed by those asserting that the survey literature portrays an overly rosy picture of racial change (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Feagin 1999). No simple description fits the full set of results in Table 3.1. Even in 1972 the careful analyst would have wisely stressed the complexity of the portrait painted by these data. Moreover, with hindsight, we can say that these data effectively foreshadowed patterns of consistent importance over the next four decades. Although the GSS eventually enriched and deepened the attitudinal record using new categories of questions, the initial pool effectively captured a number of its very durable features. Contrary to the views of survey research critics, these patterns are borne out in a variety of larger societal conditions as the trends discussed below reveal.

Racial Principles
Figure 3.1 shows trends for several key racial principle items. All show steady movement by white Americans away from supporting racial segregation and discrimination as ideals that should guide black–white interaction. A solid majority turned against segregationist or Jim Crow principles in the
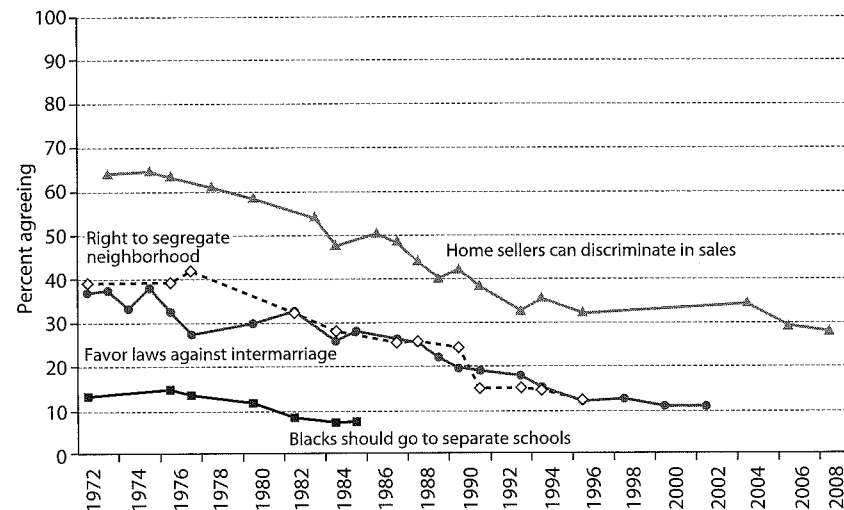

Figure 3.1. Whites' attitudes toward racial principles. Schooling: "Do you think white students and (Negro/Black) students should go to the same schools or separate schools?" ("separate schools" coded as agreeing). Intermarriage: "Do you think there should be laws against marriages between (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans) and whites?" ("yes" coded as agreeing). Neighborhood: "White people have a right to keep (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans) out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans) should respect that right." ("agree strongly" and "agree slightly" coded as agreeing). Home sales: "Suppose there is a community-wide vote on the general housing issue. There are two possible laws to vote on. One law says that a homeowner can decide for himself whom to sell his house to, even if he prefers not to sell to (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans). The second law says that a homeowner cannot refuse to sell to someone because of their race or color. Which law would you vote for?" ("owner decides" coded as agreeing).

domains of schools, housing, and racial intermarriage. By 1972, fewer than 15% of whites nationwide thought that black and white children should attend separate schools. That fell below 10% by the early 1980s. By 1985, so few people endorsed the segregationist response that the GSS dropped this item. Similarly, support for laws against intermarriage and the idea that whites have a right to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods declined steadily, from around 40% in 1972 to around 15% by the mid-1990s. Substantial opposition to laws that would prohibit individual home owners from racial discrimination when selling, however, remains even in 2008 (the last point for which we have data). Just fewer than one-third of white adults nationwide then supported the idea that individual home owners should be able to discriminate. Although quite substantial, this is far below the roughly 65% of whites who advocated such a posture in 1973.

To underscore an earlier point, we examine the trend in support for a home owner's right to discriminate by education and region simultaneously
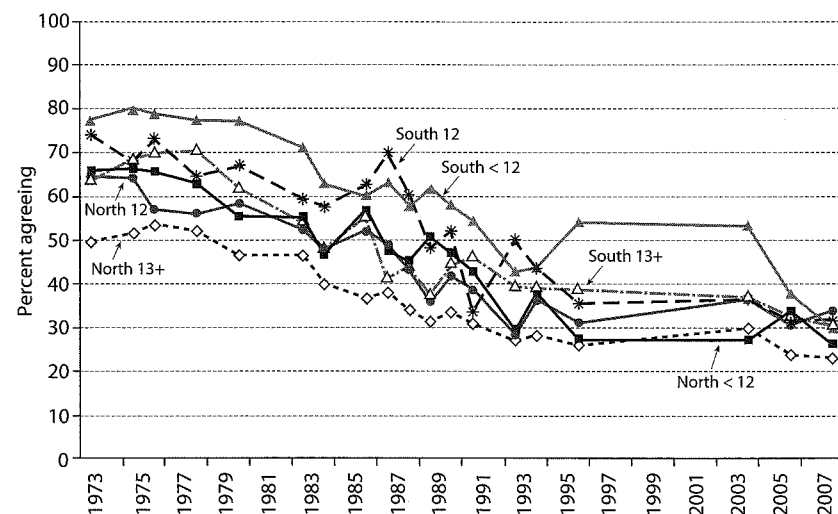
Figure 3.2. Whites' belief that home sellers can discriminate in sales, by education and region. See note to Figure 3.1 for question wording. Education is measured in years of education. "South Atlantic," "East South Central," and "West South Central" are coded as South.

Figure 3.3. Blacks' attitudes toward racial principles. See note to Figure 3.1 for question wording.

(Figure 3.2). Better educated whites and those living outside the South are a good deal less likely to endorse support for discrimination. Considering education and region jointly we find that well-educated whites outside the South least support the right to discriminate in the sale of housing whereas poorly educated southern whites most support it. Within all six groups, though, the core trend moves substantially away from supporting discrimination. Indeed, among poorly educated southern whites endorsement falls from nearly 80% in 1973 to 30% in 2008. The gap between highly educated northern whites and poorly educated southern whites fell from almost 30 percentage points in 1973 to roughly 10 percentage points in 2008.

Yet these results should also caution those who would claim that segregationist sentiment has completely vanished. In 2008, a nontrivial proportion of whites nationwide, 28%, still support an individual home owner's right to discriminate on the basis of race when selling a home, and even nearly 1 in 4 highly educated northern whites adopt this position. On the basis of careful experimental data we know that many whites supporting such a right to discriminate claim to be motivated by a competing principle of limiting government authority to coerce individuals (Schuman and Bobo 1988). At a minimum, this result suggests that other commitments may check or trump principles of racial integration and equal treatment in significant ways.

Figure 3.3 shows trends in the racial principle items among African American respondents.[5] On none of the items at any point do even as many as one-third of African Americans endorse the segregationist, discriminatory,
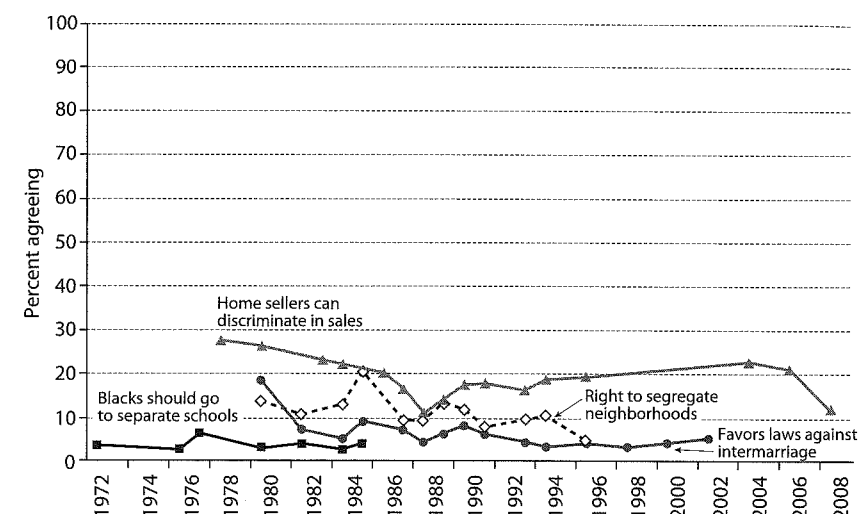
unequal treatment response. Blacks were most likely to support discrimination by home owners in selling to whomever they like, but at levels well beneath those among whites. On the whole African Americans broadly endorsed integrationist, nondiscriminatory views on racial principle items throughout the period for which we have data.

Social Distance Feelings

Figure 3.4 maps trends among whites in openness to sending their children to a school where, variously, a few, half, or most of the other children would be black. Numbers clearly matter for most respondents; moreover, no strong secular trend toward diminishing concern with the number of black children in a school is evident, in sharp contrast to the pattern for the racial principle items. The GSS dropped these items after 1996, though the hypothetical "half black" and "mostly black" schools still elicited substantial resistance then. Objection to such schools is consistent with the notion that whites are defending their group position (Blumer 1958; A. W. Smith 1981; Bobo and Tuan 2006). Accordingly, prejudice is not just a matter of feelings of like or dislike, but rather of relative group status, positioning, and entitlement.

No long-standing set of social distance items deals with neighborhoods. The GSS item on neighborhood social distance (see Table 3.1, "Object to Same SES Black Neighbor") was not repeated after 1972. Given the accumulating evidence on the importance of racial residential segregation to larger patterns of racial inequality (Massey and Denton 1993), rich examinations of attitudes on neighborhood composition preferences in several metropolitan areas
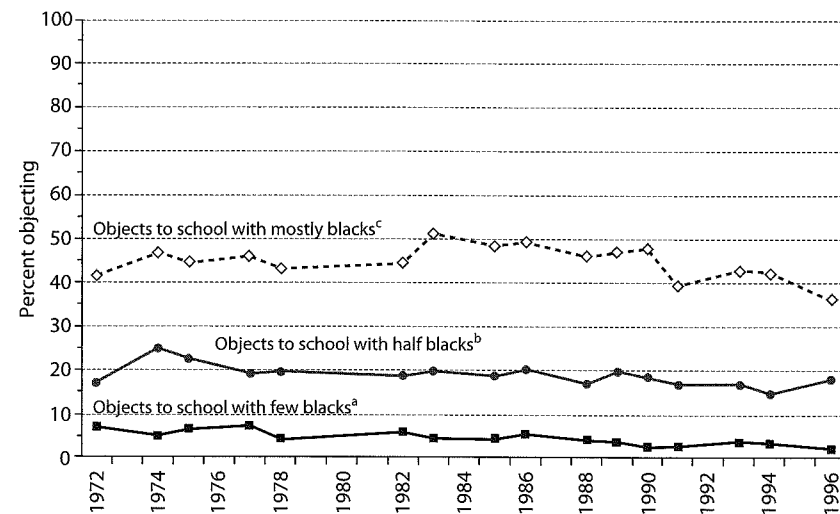
Figure 3.4. Whites' attitudes toward children attending schools with different proportions of blacks. Question a: "Would you yourself have any objection to sending your children to a school where a few of the children are (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans)?" ("yes" coded as objecting). Question b: "Would you yourself have any objection to sending your children to a school where half of the children are (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans)?" ("yes" coded as objecting). Question c: "Would you yourself have any objection to sending your children to a school where more than half of the children are (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans)?" ("yes" coded as objecting).

(Farley, Steeh, Krysan, Jackson, and Reeves 1994; Bobo and Zubrinsky 1996; Zubrinsky and Bobo 1996), and key methodological innovations (Charles 2000), the GSS later assessed residential social distance in two different ways.

First, as part of its 2000 Multiethnic America Module, the GSS replicated a key innovation from the Multicity Study of Urban Inequality project (O'Connor, Tilly, and Bobo 2001). Respondents were shown a card depicting a 15-house neighborhood with their own home in the middle and asked to indicate their preferred racial mixture by writing a "W" (for white), "B" (for black), "A" (for Asian), or "H" (for Hispanic) in the remaining homes. Results reported by Charles (2003) are reproduced in Table 3.2. Three patterns stand out. First, and arguably most encouraging, most white, black, and Hispanic respondents created neighborhoods with some degree of racial mixture. Second, all groups, on average, exhibited a degree of ethnocentrism by creating neighborhoods including substantial percentages of coracials.

Third, the results highlight the likely difficulty of creating stably integrated communities: it is not possible to achieve the mixtures preferred by all groups simultaneously. Something that looks much more like racial prejudice also appears to be involved. Thus, 1 in 5 whites nationally created an ideal neigh-

Table 3.2. Summary Statistics, Multiethnic Neighborhood Showcard Experiment, 2000 GSS[a]

Ideal neighborhood composition by target group race	Respondent race		
	White	Black	Hispanic
White			
Mean %	57	30	32
% no whites	0	9	1
% all whites	20	0	0
Black			
Mean %	27	42	19
% no blacks	25	1	18
% all blacks	0	7	0
Hispanic			
Mean %	13	15	34
% no Hispanics	32	38	3
% all Hispanics	0	0	1
Asian			
Mean %	13	13	16
% no Asians	33	32	19
% all Asians	0	0	0
N	858	152	78

Source: Charles (2003).

[a] "Now I'd like you to imagine a neighborhood that had an ethnic and racial *mix you personally* would *feel most comfortable in*. Here is a blank neighborhood card, which depicts some houses that surround your own. Using the letters A for Asian, B for Black, H for Hispanic, or Latin American and W for White, please put a letter in each of these houses to represent your preferred neighborhood where you would most like to live. Please be sure to fill in all of the houses."

borhood that was all white, 1 in 4 created a neighborhood with no blacks in it, and 1 in 3 created a neighborhood with no Hispanics or no Asians. Similarly, though fewer than 1 in 10 blacks created an all-black neighborhood or one with no whites, almost 2 out of 5 created ideal neighborhoods with no Hispanics or Asians in them. Careful multivariate models make it clear that negative racial stereotypes play an important role in structuring these neighborhood racial composition preferences (Charles 2003, 2006).[6]

The GSS has more recently begun to track changes over time in racial residential preferences. Data from the 1976, 1994, and 2004 Detroit Area Studies, however, reveal a trend toward more willingness to consider integrated neighborhoods. For example, between 1976 and 2004, the percentage of Detroit-area whites who said they would be "willing to move into" a neighborhood that was 20% African American increased from 50% to 78%. As we saw for schools (Figure 3.4), the level of integration matters: whites are far less willing to consider a 53% African American neighborhood, and such
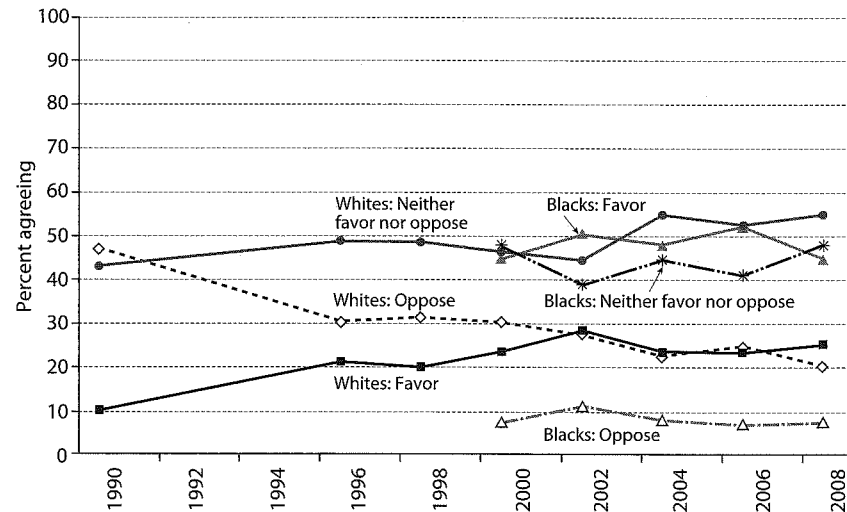
Figure 3.5. Opinion toward living in a neighborhood where half of the residents are opposite race. "Now I'm going to ask you about different types of contact with various groups of people. In each situation would you please tell me whether you would be very much in favor of it happening, somewhat in favor, neither in favor nor opposed to it happening, somewhat opposed, or very much opposed to it happening? Living in a neighborhood where (half of your neighbors were whites/half of your neighbors were blacks)?" (white responses are about black neighborhoods and black responses are about white neighborhoods).
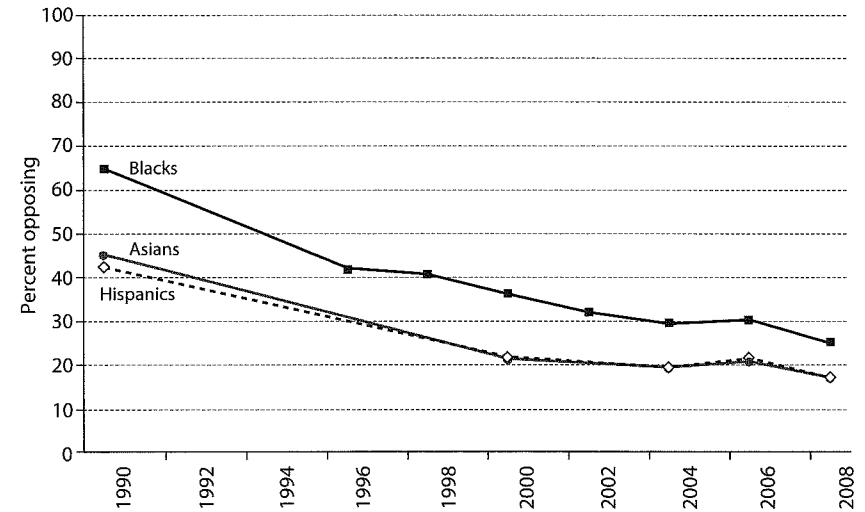

Figure 3.6. White opposition to a close family member marrying a member of another racial group. "How about having a close relative or family member marry a (Black/Asian/Hispanic) person?" ("strongly oppose" and "oppose" coded as opposing).

willingness has increased less since 1976. Between 1976 and 2004, the percentage of whites willing to consider such a neighborhood increased from 16% to 34% (Farley et al. 1994; Krysan and Bader 2007).

Among African Americans, the patterns are quite different. The vast majority (ranging from 87% and 99%) of Detroit-area African Americans are willing to live in neighborhoods that were 20% black or 53% black, and this has not changed since 1976 (Farley et al. 1994; Krysan and Bader 2007). Furthermore, the majority of African Americans in Detroit—across all three periods—ranked the approximately 50–50 neighborhood as the most attractive.

The 1990 GSS Intergroup Tolerance module introduced a set of items on residential social distance and racial intermarriage that have been measured regularly since 1996. Figure 3.5 reports the trends in whites' willingness to live in a neighborhood where "half of your neighbors were blacks." Only 10% of whites said they favored living in such a neighborhood in 1990. This response rises considerably, to 25%, by 2008. The percentage of whites opposed to living in such a neighborhood falls sharply, from roughly 47% in 1990 to 20% in 2008. Black respondents were asked a parallel question about their willingness to live in a neighborhood where "half of your neighbors would

be whites" beginning in 2000. Fewer than 10% of black respondents oppose living in such a neighborhood, and better than 40% favor living in such a neighborhood.

A final social distance item (Figure 3.6) added in 1990 deals with interracial marriage: reactions to having a close relative or family member marry, variously, a black, an Asian, or a Hispanic person. When first measured in 1990, fully 65% of whites opposed a black–white union, while 40+% opposed Asian–white or Hispanic–white unions. The data since then reveal both a general decline in objection to racial intermarriage and a considerable narrowing of the size of the gap between opposition to black–white unions and either Asian– or Hispanic–white unions. Nonetheless, even in 2008 1 in 4 whites either "opposed" or "strongly opposed" a close relative or family member marrying a black person. One might expect an accelerated decline in such opposition in the aftermath of Barack Obama's election as president, given his popularity and much-commented-upon mixed racial background.

Government Policy on Race

Next, we turn to views about the role that government and social policy should play in redressing racial inequality, a longstanding topic of concern. Figure 3.7 reports trends in responses by white Americans about whether government has a special obligation to "help improve the living standards" of African Americans. The policy referent in the question is vague: it could implicate, variously, social welfare spending, affirmative-action-type policies,
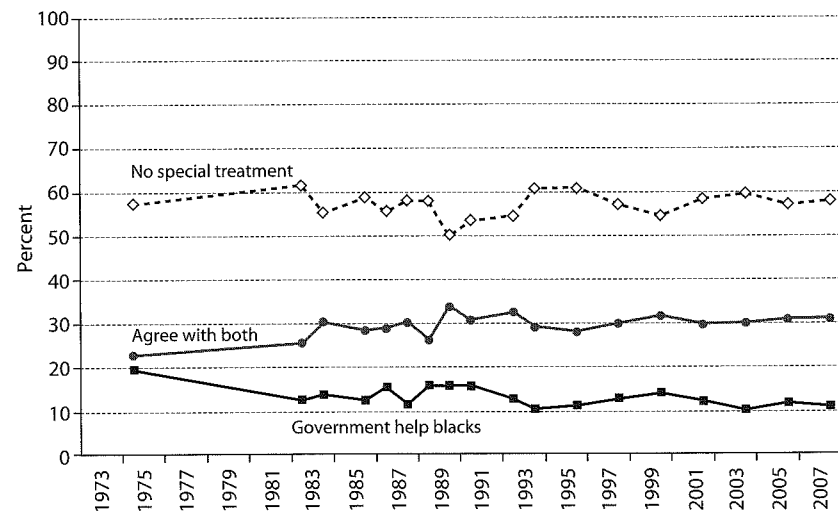
Figure 3.7. White attitudes toward government aid for blacks. "Some people think that (Blacks/Negroes/African Americans) have been discriminated against for so long that the government has a special obligation to help improve their living standards. Others believe that the government should not be giving special treatment to (Blacks/Negroes/African Americans). Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you made up your mind on this?" ("1–2" coded as government help blacks, "3" coded as agree with both, and "4–5" coded as no special treatment).

Figure 3.8. Whites' belief about the likelihood of affirmative action hurting whites. "What do you think the chances are these days that a white person won't get a job or promotion while an equally or less qualified black person gets one instead? Is this very likely, somewhat likely, or not very likely to happen these days?"

or even reparations. That ambiguity notwithstanding, the trends reveal that levels of support for such an obligation to uplift African American communities is low and indeed slightly declining over time. At no point over the more than 30-year time span did as many as 1 in 4 whites endorse such an obligation; solid majorities of whites select the "no special treatment" category over the entire period.

Beginning with the 1990 Intergroup Tolerance Module, the GSS posed a more pointed question about affirmative-action-type policies. It asked, "What do you think the chances are these days that a white person won't get a job or promotion while an equally or less qualified black person gets one instead? Is this very likely, somewhat likely, or not very likely to happen these days?" The modal and slightly increasing response (Figure 3.8) has been "somewhat likely." Slightly over 40% of whites nationally took this position in 1990, rising to nearly 50% by 2008. In addition, nearly 1 in 5 whites consistently take the even stronger position that affirmative action for blacks is "very likely" to hurt a white person's chances of getting a job or promotion, providing clear evidence that affirmative action policies face steep public opinion obstacles.

To pin down the meaning of the perception that affirmative action for blacks was costly for whites, the 1990 GSS asked a follow-up question of those
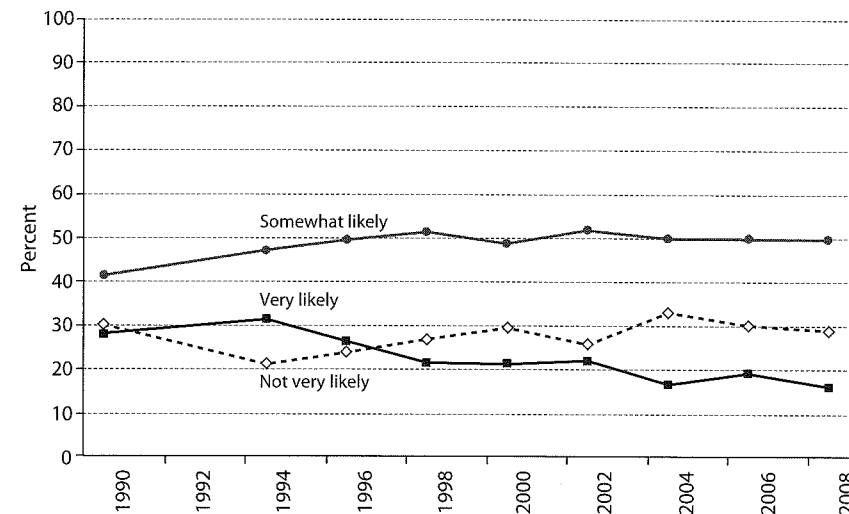
who thought it "very" or "somewhat likely" to harm whites: "Do you feel this way because of something that happened to you personally, because it happened to a relative, family member or close friend, or because you have heard about it from the media or other sources?" The results were somewhat surprising. Most whites said that they had "heard about it in the media" (40%) or from other unspecified sources (35%). Much smaller fractions reported that their beliefs were grounded in their personal experience, or that of their personal contacts.

It is certainly fair to conclude that affirmative action is controversial on the basis of these data and, furthermore, that much white opposition to it is rooted not in concrete bad experiences but rather vague, mass-mediated resentments of the policy, but it would nonetheless be a mistake to infer that opposition to government action seeking to ameliorate black disadvantage is completely implacable. For example, the 1990 GSS also tested the relative popularity of race-targeted and income-targeted social policy interventions. The results (Table 3.3) show that the income- or class-targeted policy interventions are always more popular among whites than race-targeted ones. This holds whether an intervention involves tax breaks for businesses locating in certain areas, enhanced spending on preschool and early education programs, or college scholarships for students who maintain good grades. However, clear majorities of whites supported two such interventions—early education programs and college scholarships—even when targeted specifically on blacks. This led Bobo and Kluegel (1993) to emphasize the distinction

Table 3.3. Summary Statistics, Race Targeting Experiment, 1990 GSS[a]

	Giving businesses and industry special tax breaks for locating in [poor and high unemployment/largely black] areas			Spending more money on the schools in [poor/black] neighborhoods especially for pre-school and early education programs			Provide special college scholarships for [children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds/black children] who maintain good grades		
	Class cue	Race cue	Difference	Class cue	Race cue	Difference	Class cue	Race cue	Difference
Whites									
Favor (%)	70	43	−27	87	68	−19	92	70	−22
Neither favor nor oppose (%)	16	25	9	8	15	7	6	14	8
Oppose (%)	14	32	18	5	16	11	2	16	14
N	557	549		567	555		568	559	
Blacks									
Favor (%)	73	70	−3	93	92	−1	92	96	4
Neither favor nor oppose (%)	14	21	7	3	5	2	5	4	−1
Oppose (%)	14	10	−4	4	3	−1	3	0	−3
N	73	74		74	78		74	78	

[a]"Here are several things that the government in Washington might do to deal with the problems of poverty and unemployment. I would like you to tell me if you favor or oppose them. . . . Would you say that you strongly favor it, favor it, neither favor nor oppose it, oppose it, or strongly oppose it?" (*strongly favor* and *favor* coded as favoring, *strongly oppose* and *oppose* coded as opposing).
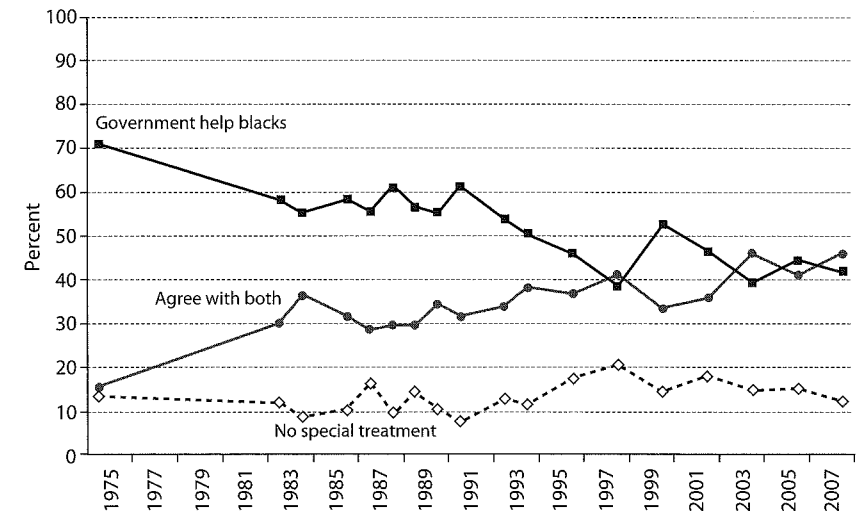
Figure 3.9. Blacks' attitudes toward government aid for blacks. See note to Figure 3.7 for question wording.

between policies following an "opportunity enhancing" logic and those seeming to affect "outcomes."

The views of African Americans help illuminate some of the public controversy surrounding affirmative action. Black and white levels of support for government efforts to improve economic outcomes for African Americans differ dramatically. Figure 3.9 shows trends among blacks in support for a government obligation to improve the living standards of blacks. In 1975 approximately 72% of African American endorsed such an obligation (far more than the 20% of whites who did so; see Figure 3.6). The percentage of blacks espousing such an obligation declines steadily, however, falling well below 50% by 2008. The percentage opposing such an obligation largely holds steady, while more blacks selected a somewhat ambiguous middle response.

Beginning in 1994 the GSS posed a question on strong versions of workplace affirmative action that would actually give blacks "preference in hiring and promotion" in order to make up for past discrimination. A very high and essentially unchanging fraction of whites opposes such "preferences" (Figure 3.10). Fewer than 2 out 5 blacks opposed such preferences when first asked in 1994, but this rises somewhat over time, with approximately 55% opposition among blacks by 2008. Thus, the black–white gap in opposition to preferential hiring and promotion policies narrowed, though it remains large.

The results on attitudes toward affirmative action reported here are limited in one important respect. Apart from the question on government's special obligation to help blacks, the GSS trend data focus on a very specific, strong
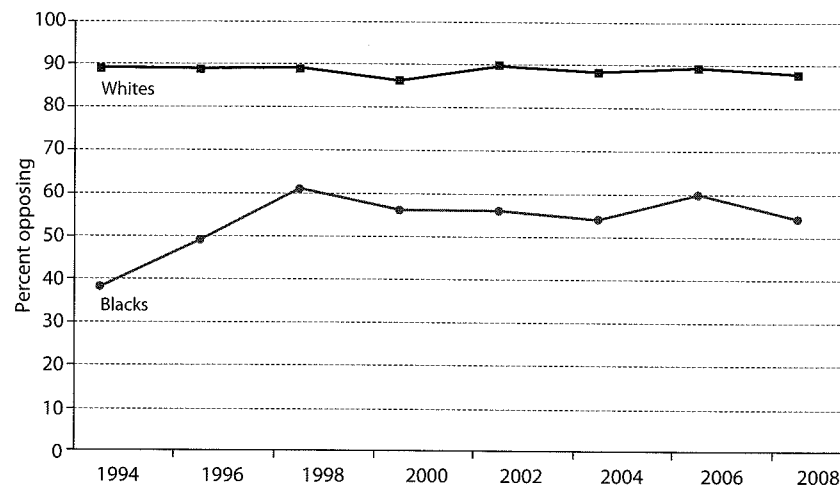
Figure 3.10. Opposition to preference in hiring or promotion for blacks. "Some people say that because of past discrimination, blacks should be given preference in hiring and promotion. Others say that such preference in hiring and promotion of blacks is wrong because it discriminates against whites. What about your opinion—are you for or against preferential hiring and promotion of blacks? If favors: Do you favor preference in hiring and promotion strongly or not strongly? If opposes: Do you oppose preference in hiring and promotion strongly or not strongly?" ("strongly oppose" and "oppose" coded as opposing).

form of affirmative action: preferences in hiring and promotion for African Americans. This likely conjures up the notion of "quotas," a policy that is both illegal (except in specific, court-ordered situations) and extremely unpopular. The long-term survey record includes no questions about the full range of programs, such as enhanced outreach and recruitment efforts and policies envisioned under the rubric of "affirmative action."

Other scholars note that support for affirmative action in surveys depends on how specifically a program is described, the type of policy involved (preferences versus quotas versus economic aid versus job training and educational assistance), and the target (women or blacks or minorities). All of these factors can affect expressed support for race-targeted policies (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Bobo and Smith 1994; Steeh and Krysan 1996). When questions starkly contrast abilities with race-based preferential treatment, fewer than 10% of whites favor the race-based policy. Support is far higher when questions ask about affirmative action that specifically would *not* include rigid quotas. Indeed, when last asked in 1988, 73% of whites favored affirmative action thus described. These contrasting figures reveal the complexity of attitudes toward affirmative action, something often missed because questions asked regularly in national surveys refer to only a few specific policies or very general issues of "government spending."

Racial Stereotypes

Examinations of racial stereotypes have long been at the center of work on intergroup attitudes and relations (Allport 1954). The *Scientific American* reports included a key item on whether blacks were inherently less intelligent than whites. They found such a sweeping decline in endorsement of the "less intelligent" response that the item was not included in early GSSs. Indeed, the rapid decline in this belief is credited as an important basis for future prointegration changes in other aspects of racial attitudes (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, and Krysan 1997).

Sociologist Mary Jackman (Jackman and Crane 1986, Jackman and Senter 1983) argued that older models and measures of stereotypes had a dichotomous, either/or, nature. She proposed that stereotypes may, in fact, be more gradational, identifying degrees of difference between groups. Based on this theoretical reconceptualization, the 1990 Intergroup Tolerance Module included a series of 7-point bipolar rating scales asking respondents to rate groups on a series of traits. This innovation revealed that stereotypes remain alive and well (T. W. Smith 1991; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Bobo and Kluegel 1997).

Ratings on two traits—how "hardworking" or "lazy" members of a group tend to be, and how "intelligent" or "unintelligent" they tend to be—have been obtained regularly since 1990. Figure 3.11 reports the percentages of white respondents who rate whites as more intelligent or more hardworking than blacks. This more gradational or qualified expression of racial stereotypes reveals that whites are still very apt to attribute negative traits to blacks more often than to whites. In 1990, when first assessed, roughly 65% of whites rated blacks as less hardworking than whites, while just under 60% rated blacks as less intelligent than whites. Such negative stereotyping subsequently falls for both traits, particularly between 1990 and 1996, remaining relatively stable over the ensuing decade.

Jackman's (1994) general treatise on race, class, and gender relations makes a strong case that the perception of even small differences between groups can be a basis for consequential differential treatment. These negative stereotypes have been shown to play a powerful role in supporting social distance preferences (i.e., the neighborhood composition preferences discussed above) and opposition to social policies targeted to assist African Americans (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Tuch and Hughes 1996; T. C. Wilson 2006). The more negative the racial stereotypes individuals hold about members of a particular group, the less willing they are to share residential space with members of that group, and the less likely they are to see members of that group as deserving of government assistance or intervention.

To these dispositional or behavioral trait beliefs we should add one other important observation: most white Americans are indeed aware that, on average, African Americans lag behind whites in economic status. When asked how "rich" or "poor" members of each race tend to be, a substantial
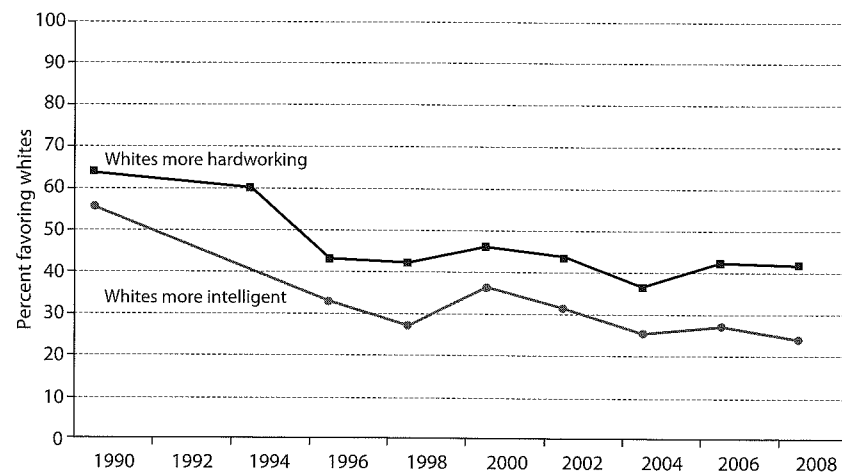
Figure 3.11. Whites' ratings of whites' industriousness and intelligence in comparison to blacks. The figure plots percentages of whites who rated whites higher than blacks on a given trait (industriousness or intelligence). "Industriousness" question: "The second set of characteristics asks if people in the group tend to be hard-working or if they tend to be lazy. Where would you rate whites in general on this scale? Blacks?" "Intelligence" question: "Do people in these groups tend to be unintelligent or tend to be intelligent? Where would you rate whites in general on this scale? Blacks?" In all, 7% of whites rated blacks as more hard-working than whites, and 6% rated blacks as more intelligent.
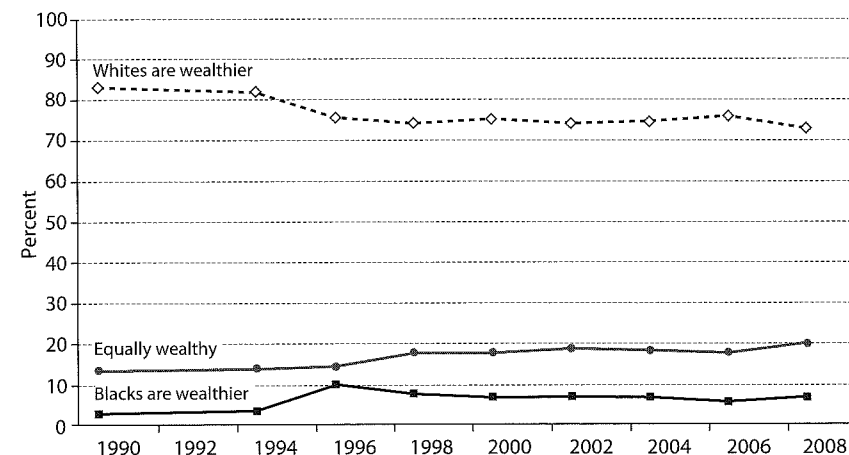

Figure 3.12. Whites' ratings of whites' wealth in comparison to blacks. "Now I have some questions about different groups in our society. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the characteristics of people in a group can be rated. In the first statement a score of 1 means that you think almost all of the people in that group are 'rich.' A score of 7 means that you think almost everyone in the group are 'poor.' A score of 4 means you think that the group is not towards one end or another, and of course you may choose any number in between that comes closest to where you think people in the group stand. Where would you rate whites in general on this scale? Blacks?" The figure plots the percentages of whites who rate blacks higher than whites on the 1–7 wealth scale, who rate the two groups equally, and who rate whites higher than blacks.

and largely stable fraction of the white adult population rates blacks as less well-off financially than whites (Figure 3.12). Just 1 in 5 whites see the two groups as equal in economic status, so they are, broadly speaking, mindful of black–white economic inequality. Just as there has been no broad secular trend toward a diminishing gap in black–white median family incomes (Darity and Myers 1998), the perception of a clearly more advantaged status for whites persists.

Explanations of Racial Inequality

Social psychologists stress that the meaning of observable social phenomena depends heavily on the causal accounts people construct for what they see (Nisbett and Ross 1980). That is, attributions about an individual's behavior or even a larger societal condition have strong implications for fundamental understandings of what we observe. Kluegel and Smith's (1986) pioneering work showed that how people perceive and explain social inequality powerfully structures what (if anything) they want to see done to address it.

Scholars of racial attitudes began to take an interest in how people perceived and explained black–white inequality in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Schuman (1969) provided the first systematic evidence that whites tend to explain black disadvantage in terms of the free will or the choices made by

blacks themselves. This constitutes a significant departure from the presumed traditional biological or Jim Crow racist ideology of black inferiority. Thereafter, Charles Glock and his students developed a more elaborate typology of "modes of explanation" of racial inequality (Apostle, Glock, Piazza, and Suelzle 1983; see also Sniderman and Hagen 1985; Schuman and Krysan 1999).

As shown above, white Americans by and large recognize black economic disadvantage. The key question then becomes one of how they explain it. Beginning in 1977, the GSS asked about four possible causes of black–white socioeconomic inequality: discrimination, less in-born ability to learn, lack of educational opportunity, and insufficient motivation and willpower. Trends in the percentages of whites endorsing each of the four explanations appear in Figure 3.13.

First, lack of "motivation or willpower" is the most commonly endorsed explanation of black disadvantage across the 1977–2008 time span. Support for this motivational account declines slightly, particularly after 1990. Second, the "less in-born ability" account is least popular at each time point, and its acceptance changes most over time; endorsement of it begins at about 25% in 1977 and falls to around 10% by 2008. Third, the strongest structural account
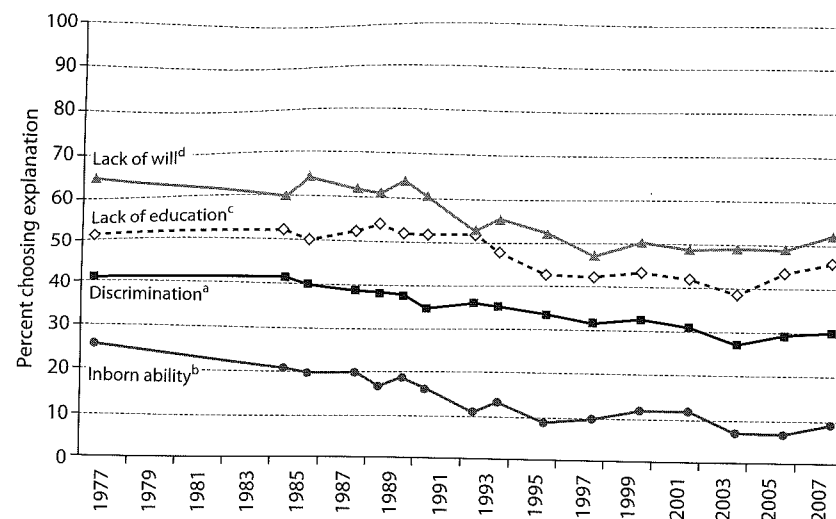
Figure 3.13. White explanations for racial socioeconomic inequality. Question a: "On the average (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans) have worse jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are . . . Mainly due to discrimination?" ("yes" coded as choosing). Question b: ". . . Because most (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans) have less in-born ability to learn?" ("yes" coded as choosing). Question c: ". . . Because most (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans) don't have the chance for education that it takes to rise out of poverty?" ("yes" coded as choosing). Question d: ". . . Because most (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans) just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves up out of poverty?" ("yes" coded as choosing).

for black–white inequality, "discrimination," was endorsed by about 2 in 5 whites in 1997 but only about 1 in 3 by 2008. The more ambiguous no "chance for education" account is always second most commonly endorsed, but its acceptance too appears to decline slightly.

These patterns make it clear that most white Americans do not embrace a single account of black–white economic inequality. Most attribute it to multiple possible sources. Kluegel's (1990) analyses of 1977–1989 GSS data developed a set of modes of explaining racial inequality that can be divided into three key groupings (Hunt 2007): person centered (attributions to ability or motivational differences), mixed (attributions to both ability and structural bases or to both motivational and structural differences), and structuralist (attributions to structural factors, educational chances, or racial discrimination). Hunt (2007) reports a substantial rise in the percentage of respondents who reject all four possible accounts of racial inequality, from 5% (1977) to 15% (2004). This pattern may reflect the emergence of what Forman (2004) has characterized as "racial apathy" (see also Forman and Lewis 2006), a growing indifference to talk of race and racial distinctions altogether.

Black–white differences in attributions for racial inequality can be large. In the 2000–2008 period, African Americans, as Table 3.4 shows, were far more likely to endorse discrimination as a cause of group inequality (59%) than were whites (30%). Interestingly, the tendency to endorse discrimination as an account of black–white inequality declines among blacks as well as whites. More surprisingly (and unlike whites), the percentage of blacks attributing racial inequality to "lack of motivation and willpower" rises. Reporting a similar pattern of decline in attributions to discrimination among Hispanic respondents, Hunt (2007) suggests that this trend may be most pronounced among younger and politically conservative blacks.

Table 3.4 sheds some light on this matter. The percentage of blacks attributing inequality to discrimination declines over time within each education level, though somewhat less among the best educated. Similarly, the percentage of blacks attributing inequality to motivation increases within each education level, slightly more among the better educated. The differences by age are even more pronounced, however: attributions to discrimination decline fully 23 percentage points among the youngest blacks, but only 11 points among the oldest. Likewise, the percentage of young blacks attributing inequality to motivation rises by a full 17 percentage points, but this attribution actually declines by 5 points among the oldest blacks.

These trends are open to several plausible interpretations. At a minimum, they show that polarization between blacks and whites in attributions for racial inequality is narrowing to a degree. They may or may not reflect a greatly reduced sensitivity to or actual exposure to discrimination among young African Americans, the increasingly distant heyday of the civil rights movement and its strong galvanizing effect on group solidarity, or growing class and political heterogeneity in the black population. But better educated, and especially younger, African Americans show the clearest drift toward less structuralist and more motivational accounts for black–white inequality.

Socioemotional Evaluations

Concern with the emotional or affective tenor of reactions to members of different groups lies at or near the core of the concept of prejudice (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford 1950; Allport 1954; Sears 1988; Jackman 1994; Bobo and Tuan 2006). Many commentators on race and social scientists regard affect measures as a part of any full portrait of racial attitudes.

The original GSS items emphasize issues of broad public discourse, rather than testing theories of racial prejudice per se, so none of those items (Table 3.1) measured socioemotional or affective responses to minority groups. Questions asked once in the 1994 Multiculturalism Model and trend items on emotional closeness added in 1996 began to give some purchase on change in whites' affective responses to blacks. Distinguished social psychologist Thomas Pettigrew (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995) proposed that in the modern

Table 3.4. Explanations for Racial Socioeconomic Inequality, by Education and Age across Selected Years

		Whites							Blacks						
			Years of education			Years of age				Years of education			Years of age		
		Pooled	<12	12	13+	18–33	34–50	51+	Pooled	<12	12	13+	18–33	34–50	51+
Due to discrimination (%)															
	1977–1989	40	40	37	43	46	39	36	77	82	72	76	75	79	79
	1990–1999	35	47	32	36	35	34	35	71	74	68	73	67	74	72
	2000–2008	30	30	27	32	31	28	32	59	62	54	62	52	58	69
Less in-born ability (%)															
	1977–1989	21	36	22	11	12	16	35	16	31	9	4	8	12	26
	1990–1999	13	27	16	6	7	8	22	11	16	12	6	10	8	15
	2000–2008	9	20	13	5	6	7	13	13	23	13	8	11	11	17
Lack of chance for education (%)															
	1977–1989	52	42	48	63	55	52	49	68	69	65	70	63	68	75
	1990–1999	47	37	41	55	46	49	47	60	63	61	57	55	55	72
	2000–2008	43	33	36	49	41	45	44	52	56	46	55	47	50	61
Lack of motivation or willpower (%)															
	1977–1989	63	74	67	51	54	62	72	35	44	34	26	30	33	44
	1990–1999	55	70	63	46	50	50	65	38	43	40	33	45	32	38
	2000–2008	50	66	61	41	45	45	57	44	51	50	38	49	42	42

Note: N for whites ranges between 5,307 and 16,906. N for blacks ranges between 517 and 2,387. For wording of explanations for racial socioeconomic inequality, see Figure 3.13. For education: years of education. For age: years of age.

Table 3.5. Whites' feelings of Sympathy and Admiration for Blacks, by Education and Region, 1994 GSS

| | | North | | | South | | |
	National	< 12 years	12 years	13+ years	< 12 years	12 years	13+ years
Very often on both	6%	5	5	7	7	4	8
Combination	60	50	54	65	61	59	66
Not very often/ never on both	34	54	41	29	32	37	27
N	1,169	102	258	429	87	108	184

For feelings of sympathy: "Now, I would like to ask whether you have ever felt the following ways about blacks and their families. For each of the feelings that I ask you about, please tell me whether you have felt that way very often, fairly often, not too often, or never? How often have you felt sympathy for blacks?" For admiration for blacks: "How often have you felt admiration for blacks?" For education: years of education. For region: "South Atlantic," "East South Central," and "West South Central" coded as South.

era, withholding positive emotions from members of a minority group is more telling than expressing active emotional hostility. Accordingly, GSS respondents were asked how often they felt "sympathy" and "admiration" for blacks.

Very few whites embrace African Americans on an emotional level (Bobo 2004). A quite low percentage of whites say "very often" on *both* the admiration and sympathy items, fewer than 1 in 10 in 1994. Even within region and education groupings, no segment of white America strongly embraces blacks emotionally. Also, fairly high percentages of white respondents report "not very often" or "never" feeling both admiration and sympathy for blacks.

Beginning in 1996, the GSS asked respondents to rate their "closeness" to whites and blacks as groups on a 1 to 9 scale. Figure 3.14 reports trends among whites for the difference in closeness to whites and blacks. The largest group of whites expresses equal closeness to both groups: between 40% and 50% do so between 1996 and 2008. This means that roughly between 50% and 60% of whites rate themselves as closer to other whites, however. Tellingly, a substantial percentage of whites favor other whites by at least 3 points on this 9-point scale, though this fraction falls slightly by the 2000s.

To the extent that basic affect is a fundamental foundation for an array of other racial attitudes and outlooks, the GSS provides clear evidence of a large socioemotional gap or bar to comity across the racial divide. These data arguably indicate that the sort of socioemotional bond essential to a sense of basic common humanity and worth is lacking for a large number of white Americans regarding their fellow black citizens.

Collective Racial Resentments

During the 1980s survey researchers began exploring new forms of anti-black sentiment that may be taking shape. Research on symbolic racism is the most prominent work advancing such a claim (Kinder and Sears 1981;
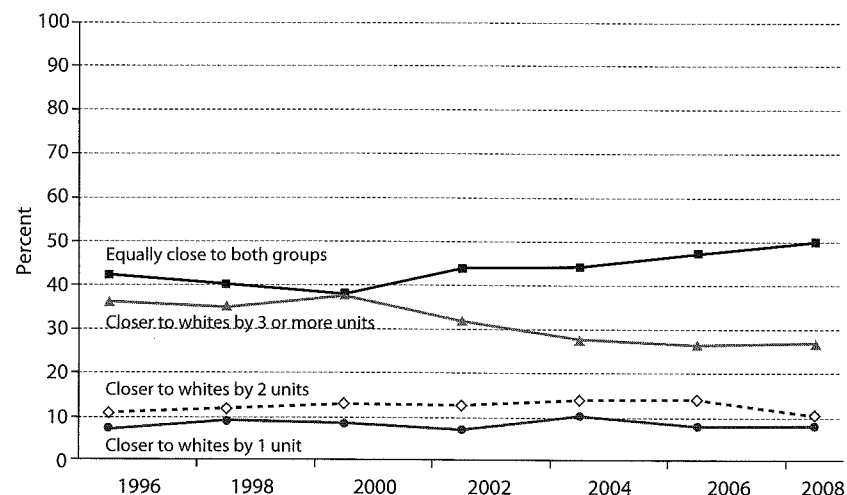
Figure 3.14. Whites' difference in closeness to whites and blacks. The question asked was, "In general, how close do you feel to blacks? And in general, how close do you feel to whites?" The figure plots percentages of whites who rated themselves as equally close to whites and blacks, or 1, 2, or 3 points closer to whites on the 1–9 closeness scale. Between 3% and 4% of whites each year indicated that they were closer to blacks.

McConahay 1986; Sears 1988; Sears and Jessor 1996), what some characterize more concretely (and less provocatively) as racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996). It suggests that with waning advocacy of Jim Crow and openly biological racism, a new discourse for expressing animosity toward African Americans developed. Central to this new type of attitude are a sense of antagonism to political demands by blacks, rejection of the assumption that real discriminatory barriers impede black advancement, and hostility to any favor or benefit blacks might now receive from government. Although the subject of intensive controversy (see Bobo 1983 and 1988b; Sniderman and Tetlock 1986; Jackman 1996; Hughes 1997; E. R. Smith 1993; Krysan 2000; Feldman and Huddy 2005), the idea that group or collective resentments are an important feature of contemporary racial attitudes has endured.

The GSS added an item that taps such collective racial resentments in 1994. The question asks whether respondents agree or disagree that "Irish, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors." This item taps collective racial resentments because it implies that "other groups made it in America without special favors, blacks should too." Throughout the 1994–2008 time span, roughly three-fourths of white Americans agreed with this assertion (Figure 3.15). In the main, the item shows no meaningful trend, despite a slight dip in 2004: the lopsided majority view among whites is that blacks need to make it all on their own.
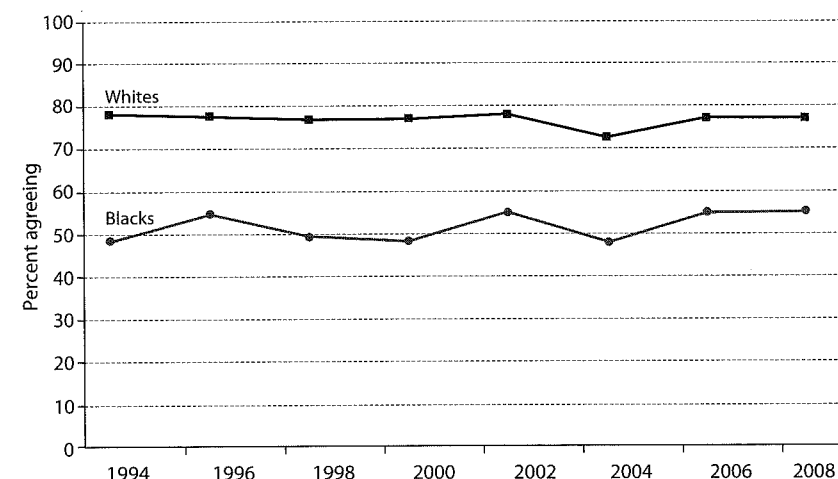

Figure 3.15. Belief that blacks should overcome prejudice without special favors. "Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with the following statement: Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors" ("agree strongly" and "agree somewhat" coded as agree).

Figure 3.15 also reports the trend in agreement with the "no special favors" assertion among blacks. Throughout the 14-year time span, whites are always substantially more likely to endorse this viewpoint than blacks, but not only do a nontrivial number of blacks agree with it (about 50%): the black–white gap actually narrows slightly over time. We suspect that important qualitative differences exist between black and white respondents in the meaning and import of agreeing with this statement. It is clear, for instance, that among those who agree with it, blacks are more likely than whites to believe that significant racial discrimination still occurs and perceive only minor behavioral differences between the races (in, e.g., the traits of intelligence and industriousness). Moreover, such views may carry less powerful consequences for views on important policy questions (e.g., support for the death penalty) among blacks than among whites (Bobo and Johnson 2004). Hunt, Jackson, Powell, and Steelman (2000) caution against assuming that measures have equivalent meaning for minority and white respondents in the absence of direct data. Similarly, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) make a strong case that members of dominant or privileged groups and of subordinate or minority ones respond asymmetrically about prominent, ideologically central beliefs like that tapped by the "no special favors" question.

Because it resonates with several other predominant beliefs about race among white Americans—stereotypes, explanations of inequality, and affective distinctions—this collective resentment item merits extended reflection. In light of several key trends among whites discussed above, it is clearer why

high endorsement of the "no special favors" position expresses collective racial resentment. It is part racial stereotype, part normative judgment or evaluation, and part perception of current or future threat. The sentiment identifies a moral shortcoming of blacks that threatens to impinge upon the well-being of putatively hardworking white Americans. Recall first the evidence of negative stereotyping, the clear-cut recognition of economic inequality favoring whites, the wide acceptance of person-centered, largely cultural/volitional accounts of black–white inequality, and the substantial expressed emotional distance from blacks. Such sentiments declare that blacks are singularly and indeed pointedly undeserving of sympathy or assistance. Following this logic, the perception that blacks are successful in getting the attention or resources of government is at least judged inappropriate and unfair to whites, if not more severely as a costly or burdensome imposition. Second, other correlational work shows that the "no special favors" position has much in common with other perceptions that members of a minority group are getting ahead at the expense of other groups (Bobo and Tuan 2006). Third, the broad endorsement of this position is consistent with other survey evidence indicating that many white Americans view blacks as disproportionately welfare dependent and as undeserving recipients of government benefits (Gilens 1999; Fox 2004; Federico 2004).

Evidence from other sources helps to illuminate what respondents mean when they say members of a minority group should "receive no special favors." One 1990 sample survey in Wisconsin about Indian treaty rights (Bobo and Tuan 2006) included open-ended probes of such responses, though they pertained to Native Americans, not blacks. The probes followed a question on whether Indians received "unfair advantages given to them by the government." Though not aimed at blacks, the replies are instructive. Among them were remarks to this effect:

"Well, they sit on their lazy butts and do nothing and they get their welfare checks and go sit in bars all night" or "Well, I think that they feel they're owed this, and I don't think it's fair. It's the same people who are on AFDC and keep collecting and don't bother to do anything to get out of it." (Bobo and Tuan 2006, pp. 146–47)

Probes following a question on whether Native Americans were getting ahead at the expense of non-Indians elicited very similar remarks. Bobo and Tuan quote one respondent: "If they are getting food stamps and welfare coming out of our taxes, I'm paying for them living without working. I'm working for them," and yet another as follows: "They are asking too much from the government. Niggers don't get all that. This was their land a long time ago, but that is past" (Bobo and Tuan 2006, pp. 156–57).

Other nonsurvey data reveal collective racial resentments of blacks more directly. Evidence of such sentiments appears in a number of recent influential qualitative works. Cultural sociologist Michèle Lamont's (2000, pp. 60–61)

The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration illustrates how these collective racial resentments blend stereotype, normative or moral judgment, and perceived threat. She writes of one of her subjects,

Vincent is a workhorse. He considers himself "top gun" at his job and makes a very decent living. His comments on blacks suggest that he associates them with laziness and welfare and with claims to receiving special treatment at work through programs such as affirmative action. He says: "Blacks have a tendency to . . . try to get off doing less, the least possible . . . to keep the job where whites will put in that extra oomph. I know this is a generality and it does not go for all, it goes for a portion. It's this whole unemployment and welfare gig. A lot of the blacks on welfare have no desire to get off it. Why should they? It's free money. I can't stand to see my hard-earned money [said with emphasis] going to pay for someone who wants to sit on his ass all day long and get free money."

Lamont (2000, p. 62) concludes that a number of the white working-class men she interviewed "underscore a concrete link between the perceived dependency of blacks, their laziness, and the taxes taken from their own paychecks."

This is not an isolated finding. For example, Mary Waters (1999, p. 177) observed a very similar pattern among white managers and employers. She writes, "Most white respondents were much more able to tap into their negative impressions of black people, especially 'underclass' blacks whom they were highly critical of. These opinions were not just based on disinterested observation. There was a direct sense among many of the whites that they personally were being taken advantage of and threatened by the black population."

Likewise, William Julius Wilson reported directly parallel sentiments in his study of Chicago-area neighborhoods and race relations. One subject voiced collective racial resentments very directly:

This whole city is going down the fucking toilet. . . . If [Mayor Daley's] dad knew what he was doing he would turn in his grave. Now old man Daley, he was for the blue-collar worker. Used to be that when you had those jobs you had 'em for life and you could raise a family. It's all different now, taxes and all that shit is killing the workingman. We're paying to support all the fucking niggers and minorities. . . . Yeah, but I'll tell ya, if this city keeps going the way it is, it's going to drive all the good working people right out of it. It's all fucked up and I tell ya why: too many niggers an' Mexicans an' minorities in this city. I mean niggers don't pay taxes, spics don't pay taxes. If we leave there'll be nothing in this goddamn city. (W. J. Wilson and Taub 2006, pp. 23–24)

This language couples attributions of traits (laziness), violations of values (hard work and self-reliance), and moral condemnation. As well, group comparisons, sense of threat, and identity-engaging elements are clearly present.

Social scientists arguably have been slow to appreciate the full significance of collective resentments. Political pollsters and journalists identified them as a broad-gauge outlook of powerful political import. In their memorable book *Chain Reaction*, Edsall and Edsall (1991, p. 182) focus on resentments, quoting Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg's description of a significant segment of white voters at length:

> These white Democratic defectors express a profound distaste for blacks, a sentiment that pervades almost everything they think about government and politics. . . . Blacks constitute the explanation for their [white defectors] vulnerability and for almost everything that has gone wrong in their lives; not being black is what constitutes being middle class, not living with blacks is what makes a neighborhood a decent place to live. . . . The special status of blacks is perceived by almost all of these individuals as a serious obstacle to their personal advancement. Indeed, discrimination against whites has become a well-assimilated and ready explanation for their status, vulnerability and failures.

We focus attention on these collective resentments here because of the central and almost era-defining quality. Support for segregation, revulsion at interracial marriage, and belief in the inherent inferiority of blacks were the ideological cornerstones of the Jim Crow era. Collective racial resentments are among the centerpieces of the new laissez-faire racism era (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997).

Multidimensionality and Scientific Progress

What does it mean? Have racial attitudes improved, or stagnated, or worsened? Is there more or less prejudice now than in the past? In trying to characterize racial attitudes in the United States—even that very particular subset of them measured by the GSS—no admonition could be more apt than Alfred North Whitehead's phrase "seek simplicity and distrust it." Long ago, social psychologist Gordon Allport (1954) cautioned against searching for "simple and sovereign" explanations of racial attitudes. Yet to a surprising degree, scholarly discourse mirrors the popular penchant for sweeping simplistic generalizations asserting, variously, that racism is either implacable or diminishing. We believe, first and foremost, that keeping the full record in view provides a strong corrective against oversimplification and inferential errors.

Patterns in the lion's share of the initial (1972) GSS racial attitude items suggested an America finished with formally institutionalized segregation

and discrimination, and increasingly endorsing the opposite. Jim Crow attitudes and de jure bias appeared to be in clear retreat. Yet, to conclude that antiblack prejudice or racism was gone would have been a mistaken inference, far beyond what the data directly showed. That era's GSS did not measure many key aspects of racial attitudes, including beliefs about the causes of black–white economic inequality, attitudes on affirmative action, racial stereotypes, and affective or socioemotional orientations. Only one item (on blacks "pushing" where they were unwanted) arguably tapped any collective or racial resentments then present. Moreover, responses to some items still revealed nontrivial levels of support for antiblack or segregationist postures (e.g., support for an individual home owner's right to sell on a discriminatory basis).

Second, the multidimensional nature of racial attitudes should be borne in mind constantly (Jackman 1977), against the temptation to array all attitudes along a single prejudice-to-tolerance continuum (Bobo 1983). Configurations of views prove to be complex. Whether racial prejudice has increased, decreased, or remained the same is perhaps a wrong, or at least misspecified, question. Better is to ask about the key domains of attitudes and the significant distributions and configurations of those outlooks (Bobo 2001).

Third, good social science emerges from the regular interaction of theory building and empirical research and hypothesis testing (Lieberson 1992). The over-time development of racial attitude items in the GSS illustrates this process: it has incorporated measures of entirely new conceptual domains and items that better address intergroup attitudes in a multiethnic and multiracial America. On a more ad hoc basis, one-time modules have illuminated key questions via survey-based experiments, follow-up probes, and other innovations. Choices of both the new trends to measure and the items for topical modules have been driven by changes in U.S. society, scientific feedback, and findings from earlier rounds of data collection. Measuring these emerging conceptual types of attitudes has much illuminated critical patterns in attitudes and actual social relations alike.

Attitudes and Behavior

We posit that racial attitudes are important in their own right. It is of vital sociological utility to know what basic principles guiding race relations people assume, their willingness to enter situations with varying racial mixtures in different domains of life, and the role that most white Americans deem appropriate for government in addressing extant racial inequality. The full meaning of responses to such questions can be assessed only once we know the behavioral traits and expectations individuals hold about members of minority or out-groups, and how they perceive and explain patterns of intergroup inequality. Configurations of attitudes yield information on the

social climate, political context, and identities and assumptions that individuals bring into many varied social interactions and settings.

Nonetheless, it is fair to ask what bearing these attitudes have on behavior. The attitude–behavior connection has been controversial in the past (La Piere 1934) and occasionally still is (Quillian 2006) despite otherwise compelling evidence that attitudes are relevant to behavior (Schuman 1995). In what remains the best sociological examination of this linkage, Schuman and Johnson (1976, p. 199) concluded, "Our review has shown that most [attitude-behavior] studies yield positive results. The correlations that do occur are large enough to indicate that important causal forces are involved, whatever one's model of the underlying causal process may be."

It would be a mistake, however, to posit a mechanistic and invariant attitude-behavior relationship. Schuman and Johnson identify several conditions to bear in mind in considering attitude-to-behavior connections. First, seriously assessing an attitude–behavior relation requires reliable, multi-item measures of both the underlying attitude and the underlying behavior of interest. Many, if not most, prominent failures to link attitudes to behavior involve simplistic attitude measurements and a single behavioral act, a pattern still evident in some critical literature (e.g., Quillian 2006). Truly meaningful tests of the attitude–behavior association require equally strong measurement of both concepts.

Second, Schuman and Johnson stress the importance of measuring attitude and behavior at the same level of specificity. Again, an attitude–behavior connection may not be found when, for instance, one very specific behavior is predicted by a single very general attitude measure. Third, attributes of the attitude and the social context may importantly condition the strength of an attitude–behavior relation. For example, attitudes that are highly central or salient to an individual may be linked far more consistently to potentially relevant behaviors than those that are not very salient or central (see Bobo and Tuan 2006, chap. 4). Likewise, particular situational constraints may impinge upon the attitude–behavior congruence. For example, a prejudiced restaurant owner may face financial and legal sanctions for overtly acting on this attitude. This does not render the attitude meaningless or prevent this person from acting in an attitude-consistent fashion in more subtle, less observable ways, or in less readily monitored settings.

Hence the key question for us is less about what specific individual behaviors racial attitudes predict and much more about the extent to which our portrait of the patterning and trend in attitudes is consistent with relevant societal behavioral trends and conditions. From this standpoint, we believe that the real attitudinal record strongly corresponds to many major social patterns, conditions, and trends regarding race and racial division in American society.

The attitudinal record on race, sociologically speaking, is a key ingredient in the basic constitution and experience of race relations in the United States. Much as employment rates, earnings, and occupational data help to flesh out the economic conditions and structure of a society, a multidimensional mapping of racial attitudes and beliefs elucidates the racial conditions and structure of a society. The broad patterns we identify are features of social organization that, ceteris paribus, we expect to have implications for related behaviors and outcomes.

The broad correspondence between attitudinal trends and other related social trends appears very strong. For example, at an early point the attitudinal record indicated that government efforts to substantially desegregate schools and communities would likely face resistance. Survey data certainly captured well the level of opposition to school busing for purposes of integration. Moreover, they pointed to likely controversy over the reach and nature of affirmative action efforts regarding both educational opportunity and employment/workplace opportunity.

Likewise, patterns indicating persistent racial stereotyping, appreciable affective differentiation, and widespread collective resentment suggest considerable bases for often fraught, tension-filled, and conflictual interactions along the color line. Views on interracial marriage parallel behavioral outcomes in three respects: (1) black–white intermarriage remains infrequent relative to white intermarriage with either Asians or Hispanics, (2) the number of black–white intermarriages is rising, and (3) social apprehension about such unions is ongoing but lessening.

The full record also strongly points to a large and growing orbit of social and political acceptance for African Americans. This too is borne out by manifold behavioral evidence: the growth and size of the black middle class, declining levels of racial residential segregation, and even the election of Barack Obama as the 44th (and first African American) president of the United States.

We are not claiming that attitudes caused or created these other outcomes, though in general we expect that individual attitudes and behaviors exhibit an important degree of consistency. Our point is twofold: First, the all-too-common sociological assertion that the attitudinal record paints a purely and unduly optimistic picture of race relations at odds with actual behavioral data on segregation, inequality, and discrimination is simply wrong. Second, analytically these attitude data provide a very rich and robust portrait of the sociological state of race relations.

Indeed the frequent assumption that attitudinal data either tell one simple story or are too contradictory to parse sensibly is curious. Certainly an examination of median family incomes by race would yield useful information on the extent of race-related economic inequality. But careful analysts would surely insist on data from numerous indicators that capture the multidimensionality of economic standing and inequality. Information on hours worked, wage rates, work force experience, job titles and status, authority in the work place, benefits packages, wealth holdings, and the like would all contribute

to a full sociological portrait of economic inequality. Similar remarks apply to most other domains of social existence. It is thus deeply puzzling that so many sociologists disregard the complexity and multidimensionality of racial attitudes (Schuman 1972).

Conclusions

Taking stock of thinking on race during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, historian George Fredrickson (1971, p. 321) identified six key elements of then-dominant social thought. He noted the widespread acceptance of ideas that blacks were different from and inferior to whites and that such differences would not be quickly or easily changed. Consequently, race mixing and intermarriage were to be avoided at all costs, hostility to or prejudice against blacks was presumed natural and inevitable, and biracial civic equality was simply inconceivable.

American society has moved a very long distance away from that deeply racialized and overtly racist ideology. The benchmark NORC surveys that informed the early *Scientific American* reports show the degree of national acceptance of such ideas at the time of World War II. By then support for proposals such as the colonization, or the near-complete removal, of the American black population to Africa—at one time very serious matters—had largely vanished. But U.S. whites endorsed many other aspects of what Fredrickson terms a "white supremacist" position as recently as the early 1940s, particularly in southern states.

We offer seven broad conclusions about the attitudinal record on race among white Americans. First and foremost, it documents a sweeping fundamental change in norms regarding race. A Jim Crow–era commitment to segregation, explicit white privilege, revulsion against mixed marriages, and the categorical belief that blacks were inherently and biologically inferior to whites collapsed. Broad support for equal treatment, integration, and a large measure of tolerance supplanted these views. Second, despite accepting integration as a general principle and a small minority presence in schools, neighborhoods, or other public social spaces, whites express strong social distance preferences; indeed, a racial hierarchy of association remains, with African Americans at or near its bottom (Charles 2006).

Third, support for a strong, active government role in ameliorating racial inequality and segregation is limited, with little movement in a prointervention direction. Policies aimed at enhancing the human capital attributes of African Americans, especially those that involve "playing by the rules of the game," are reasonably popular. The GSS data indicate, however, that affirmative action and other vigorous efforts by government to bring about integration or reduce racial inequality face an uphill struggle for public acceptance (Bobo 1991).

Fourth, negative racial stereotypes remain widespread, but they differ from past stereotyping in two important ways. Contemporary negative views of blacks have a gradational or qualified, rather than categorical, character. The basis for such perceptions also appears to have shifted away from presumed biological or natural differences toward presumptions rooted in group culture. Fifth, and closely related, core accounts or explanations of black–white socioeconomic inequality have moved decisively from biology to culture. Hence a core element of what might be labeled racial prejudice remains but has undergone a noteworthy qualitative shift to a more porous and potentially modifiable stance.

Sixth, most white Americans maintain a significant affective or socioemotional distance from African Americans. Seventh, a broad and widely shared cultural motif among white Americans involves collective racial resentments. Accompanying persistent negative stereotypes, predominantly cultural explanations of black disadvantage, and rejection of a strong government role in redressing racial inequality, the sine qua non of the new racial ideological regime in America is a belief that blacks are singularly undeserving of "special treatment" and should just sink or swim in the modern free market.

Important changes appear to be under way in the attitudes of African Americans as well. Three patterns stand out. First, blacks are less and less likely to explain racial inequality in structural, discrimination-based terms. Second, blacks have shifted discernibly toward more motivational and cultural accounts of racial inequality. Third, black support for certain forms of government intervention to advance the status of African Americans has declined. These are quite portentous trends indeed that call for more careful investigation with large black samples. Is it really a rise in conservatism among blacks? Is it a concession by blacks to largely implacable white opposition to vigorous desegregation and affirmative-action-type policies? Is it a weakening of the sense of common fate and group consciousness among blacks? Educational and especially age differences in some views are suggestive, but more fine-grained analyses than we can conduct here are necessary.

The GSS provides an important sociological lens on race in the United States, one that allows insight into critical aspects of the meaning of racial division over the past four decades. The initial GSS pool of questions on race largely reflected topical concerns of the early 1970s, but nonetheless covered significant terrain with regard to race relations. It broadened over the years to incorporate wholly new theoretical concepts and subject matter, while items on which overwhelming popular consensus had been reached were removed. Special modules in 1990, 1994, and 2000 explored key issues in greater depth, sometimes by systematic experimentation. Some of these innovations later became new trend items. Others examined intergroup attitudes toward Hispanics and Asians. As GSS samples accumulate, the capacity to examine the views of black and Hispanic respondents in detail by pooling data across years rises steadily. The substantive contribution and analytical power of the

GSS lens on U.S. intergroup relations, in fact, grow increasingly with continued biennial administration of the survey and its continued practice of scientific innovation.

Notes

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1. Since many GSS items are drawn from earlier surveys, it is of course possible to extend some trends back over 40 years, particularly the early set of race-related items.

2. This trend coincided with the rising black activism of the time, especially the emergence of the "black power" slogan and movement (see Bobo 1988a for related attitude trend analyses).

3. Most items in Table 3.1 were in the first (1972) GSS. Two (RACOPEN and NATRACE) were first measured in 1973.

4. We follow Schuman, Steeh, and Bobo (1985) in examining data for respondents age 21 and over. We also report percentages excluding don't know responses, as we could discern no systematic rise in don't know responses for the items we examine.

5. Many of these items were not initially asked of black respondents either out of apprehension about potentially insulting them or on the assumption that black responses would be obvious. The trends for blacks are based on much smaller annual sample sizes than those for whites, and hence show much greater volatility.

6. The wording of the "multiethnic showcard" itself does not expressly equate the social class background of potential neighbors. Respondents are asked to specify the mixture "that you personally would feel most comfortable in." Multivariate analyses, however, usually include direct controls for perceived differences in class background between groups as well as for direct measures of in-group attachment. The strong effects of racial stereotypes are net of both of these factors (Charles 2006).

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