

CHAPTER 6

## Racial Context, Public Attitudes, and Welfare Effort in the American States

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For decades, social scientists have recognized a connection between the politics of race and welfare policy. Researchers consistently find a strong relationship between the size of a state's minority population and its generosity to social welfare recipients (Howard 1999). States with larger proportions of minorities tend to be less generous in extending benefits to welfare recipients (Wright 1976). In a somewhat different research setting, students of public opinion and political psychology have demonstrated that at the individual level, feelings white Americans express about the minorities they perceive to be the main recipients of welfare benefits influence their support for these programs (Gilens 1998; Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman 1997). While scholars have suggested that these lines of research, with their conceptual similarities, must be connected (as Fording discusses in chapter 3 of this volume), it has not been until recently that we have been able to assess how they might fit together.

This chapter extends previous work investigating the influence a state's racial composition has on white attitudes about minorities and welfare spending, and how these attitudes subsequently affect state welfare programs (Johnson 2001). Aggregate white attitudes about minorities represent a facet of public opinion distinct from their judgments of the appropriate scope of welfare spending and mass political ideology.

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State policymakers are sensitive to these aspects of public opinion, with attitudes about welfare influencing the reduction of welfare rolls in the states and racial attitudes affecting the amount of support program beneficiaries receive.

Linkages between Public Opinion and Policy in the States

From the early work of Miller and Stokes (1963) to more recent scholarship on representation, much evidence connects public opinion and government output in the United States. In particular, Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993) demonstrate that the general ideological orientation of mass publics in the states influences the types of policies their governments adopt. Beyond identifying this general connection between public opinion and policy outputs, however, research has not extensively explored the effect specific facets of public opinion have on public policy in the American states. Part of the problem has been a lack of suitable public opinion data collected at the state level. For more than a decade, researchers have had access to a well-constructed, demonstrably stable and reliable measure of mass ideology, but little data on other elements of public opinion in the states. Recent work building on the strategy Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993) used to gauge state ideology and partisanship has provided researchers access to measures of specific public preferences and attitudes in the American states (Brace et al. 2002). Similarly, Norrander (2001) has constructed measures of aggregate state-level attitudes about the death penalty, abortion, and several other policy areas using public opinion data from the National Senate Election Study.

Given what we have learned about the general relationship between public opinion and policy, I expect policymakers to be sensitive to other mass attitudes expressed by the majority of their constituents. Using data from the General Social Survey (GSS), I am able to explore how public opinion among the racial majority of American states has influenced welfare programs and reform in the states. If the psychological relationship between race and welfare manifests itself in aggregate public opinion, and this public opinion is represented in the policy-making process as we might expect, interstate variation in these attitudes could help explain variation in state welfare policies. This is particularly important given the role states have played in administering programs such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and their increased responsibilities

during the recent transition to its successor, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

### Context, Contact, and Attitudes about Race and Welfare

Since the time of V. O. Key's (1949) influential study of the American South, a great deal of evidence indicates the racial composition of a polity influences the racial attitudes of its residents, particularly the racial attitudes of majority group members about minorities. This "group threat" hypothesis suggests that when a minority group constitutes a small fraction of a population, it poses only a small threat to the interests of the majority racial group. Increased numbers imply increased threat—a minority more competitive in the economy and in politics. This increased threat leads to increased animosity toward minorities among those in the majority. In the contemporary South (Glaser 1994; Giles and Buckner 1993), across the United States (Huckfeldt and Kohfeldt 1989), and in Europe (Quillian 1995), larger minority populations appear to be associated with antiminority hostility and less desirable policies for those minorities, such as stricter voter registration laws. Further, these feelings of threat appear to be exacerbated by economics: as economic conditions in a community worsen, members of the racial or ethnic majority grow less supportive or tolerant of the minority due to their financial insecurity (Oliver and Mendelberg 2000).

Contrary to the expectations of "group threat" theorists, students of intergroup contact argue that isolation from members of other races rather than exposure to them aggravates prejudice among members of the majority. They find that increased interaction among members of different races combats stereotyping and reduces prejudice (Allport 1954; Kinder and Mendelberg 1995). Forbes summarizes this literature well: "liking and association go together" (1997, 111). For example, Carsey (1995) finds that white voters living in diverse precincts were more likely to support an African American mayoral candidate than whites living in homogeneous districts. Similarly, Voss (1996) demonstrates that the white residents of racially diverse areas of Louisiana were not particularly responsive to David Duke during his early-1990s political campaigns, with more support for the former Ku Klux Klan leader coming from predominantly white suburban areas of the state.

While appearing contradictory, the context literature and studies of

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interracial contact may not be irreconcilable. For example, Hero (1998) identifies a consistent relationship between the racial diversity of states and a number of state policies and social outcomes: States with homogeneous white populations and those with the largest minority populations appear to produce policies most hostile to minorities. Heterogeneous states offer outcomes less hostile to minorities. His findings, along with others (Branton and Jones 1999; Fording 1997; Taylor 1998), suggest the relationship between the size of minority populations and social outcomes disadvantageous to them is curvilinear. This curve-shaped relationship between diversity and social outcomes for minorities that Hero and others have found may be able to help us to integrate these seemingly divergent expectations about contextual threat and social interaction.

If we assume that in homogeneous social environments in the United States, the white majority's lack of interaction with minorities and their subsequent ignorance about people of other races breed fear and intolerance, the presence of minorities should provide increased opportunities for interaction and ultimately ease racial conflict. However, past some population level of minorities, whites may feel that their interests are threatened. These cross pressures could intersect to create the observed curvilinear relationship. In this vein, Stein, Post, and Rinden (2000) find a strong positive relationship between the proportion of minorities in a county and the frequency with which whites report social interaction with nonwhites. Underlying their analysis is the expectation that meaningful interracial interaction is not possible without a sufficiently diverse population. Focusing on Anglo-Latino relations, they use these insights to model white attitudes about immigration as a function both of patterns of social interaction and the proportion of an area made up of members of the ethnic minority.

Consistent with these literatures, I expect white attitudes about African Americans in the states to be influenced both by patterns of interracial interaction and the potential threat posed by populations of minority residents. While proximity to minorities should provoke feelings of threat among members of a polity's white majority, it should also provide avenues for interracial exchange and a smoothing of racial hostilities. Whites in states with larger populations of African Americans and other minorities are expected to be less supportive of the social inclusion of these groups among members of the white majority. But meaningful social interaction among members of different races may only be possible when a state is sufficiently diverse. Where it is possible, interracial inter-

action should improve race relations and generate more support for the social inclusion of minorities. Taken together, these threat and contact effects may help explain the curvilinear shape of the relationship between racial composition and white attitudes, public policy and social outcomes found in the racial context literature.

*Contact, Racial Attitudes, and Beliefs about Welfare Spending across the United States*

This research on interracial interaction and group threat suggests two specific hypotheses about aggregate public opinion among whites about African Americans. First, other things equal, whites in states with larger populations of African Americans should have less positive attitudes about minorities. Second, whites should be friendlier to blacks in states where there is greater interaction among members of different races. To test these hypotheses, I measure white attitudes about African Americans and patterns of interracial interaction in the states generated using data from the GSS cumulative file, 1974–98 (Brace et al. 2002).<sup>1</sup> These measures are constructed by creating individual-level indicators and aggregating the scores on each of these indicators by state, discussed in the appendix. *Racial Tolerance* is an index of white attitudes<sup>2</sup> toward desegregated schools and neighborhoods, interracial marriage, hosting African American guests, and perceptions of blacks pushing “where they are not wanted.” Ranging between 0 and 1, larger scores on the measure indicate friendlier white attitudes toward minorities. *Interracial Interaction* is a measure of self-reported social contact between whites and blacks: attending an interracial church, dining together, and living in a multiracial neighborhood.

Measuring state racial composition as the percentage of a state’s population made up of African Americans (U.S. Department of Commerce 1990), the analysis presented in table 6.1 indicates that controlling for education, income, and mass ideology, the white residents of states with higher proportions of black residents tend to be less supportive of their social inclusion.<sup>3</sup> However, in states where whites report having greater interaction with African Americans, we observe less hostile aggregate attitudes toward minorities.<sup>4</sup> These variables account for more than half of the variation in state racial attitudes (adj.  $R^2 = 0.56$ ). While this particular analysis makes use of aggregate data, an individual-level model reveals the same pattern: individuals in diverse states are less supportive

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of racial integration, while whites who report having some form of contact with African Americans have more tolerant racial views.<sup>5</sup>

But how are these racial concerns related to public judgments expressed about welfare spending? The literature on attitudes about welfare among whites finds that opposition to social spending is influenced by the acceptance of racial stereotypes (Peffley, Hurwitz, and Sniderman 1997). At the individual level, Gilens finds racial attitudes are “the most important source of opposition to welfare among whites” (1995, 994). In the aggregate, I expect to find similar relationships between racial tolerance and white attitudes about welfare. To measure attitudes about welfare spending, I aggregate at the state level the answers white respondents give to a GSS question about social spending. Larger numbers indicate that on average white respondents in a state feel more government funds should be spent on welfare programs.

The measures used here are quite different from those used by others to explore linkages among white attitudes about race and welfare, which have focused on the acceptance of racial stereotypes rather than the social inclusion of minorities. As mentioned above, the number of public opinion measures that can be developed is constrained by the questions GSS has asked regularly over time. Thus, while many of these stereotyping questions have appeared on the GSS, they have not been presented to respondents with the frequency of the social integration question. In addition, the relationship between individual racial attitudes and attitudes about welfare spending may be blunted by the process of aggregating them to the state level (Langbein and Lichtman 1978, 10).

**TABLE 6.1. State Racial Attitudes and Beliefs about Welfare**

	Racial Tolerance		Standardized Slope
	Slope	SE	
Percent Black	-0.005***	(0.002)	-0.374***
Interracial Interaction	0.243*	(0.168)	0.208*
Mass Ideology	0.003	(0.002)	0.234
Per Capita Income	0.0000002	(0.000)	0.007
Education	0.015**	(0.007)	0.331**
Constant	0.503**	(0.144)	
Adj. $R^2 = 0.558$			

Note:  $N = 43$ . Table reports OLS coefficients for models weighted by the number of respondents included in the GSS cumulative file, 1974–98.

\* $p < 0.10$     \*\* $p < 0.05$     \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed tests)

In spite of these concerns about the data and measures used here, there is a modest correlation between white attitudes about blacks and support for additional welfare spending (Spearman's  $\rho = .26$ ,  $p < .05$ , one-tailed test). White welfare attitudes are modestly related to the proportion of welfare rolls made up of African Americans, with higher proportions of minority clients associated with less support for welfare spending (Spearman's  $\rho = .36$ ,  $p < .01$ , one-tailed test). Support for welfare is also associated with state mass ideology, as measured by Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993), with whites in more liberal states tending to be more supportive of additional welfare spending (Spearman's  $\rho = .21$ ,  $p < .10$ , one-tailed test).

### Benefit Payments and the Leaning of Welfare Rolls in the American States

Given the expectation that democratically elected policymakers in the states will be responsive to majority public opinion, understanding the forces that shape attitudes about race and welfare policies should also help us understand certain policies and social outcomes. Elsewhere, I have shown that state welfare generosity—the size of monthly AFDC payments per recipient—is influenced by racial composition and white racial attitudes in the states (Johnson 2001). The analysis below extends that work in two ways. It expands the basic model to include the indicator of support for welfare spending itself. This allows me to ask whether policymakers respond to public opinion when setting welfare policy and, if they do, which aspects of public opinion are relevant. Are policymakers sensitive to judgments about the welfare spending, or to the racial views of their constituents when setting welfare policy? I also examine two different facets of state welfare policy. A great deal of scholarship on AFDC has focused on state spending (Howard 1999). However, Hero strongly advocates the use of measures that indicate how public policies affect people (1998), and Hanson (1983) urges scholars to focus on the content of social policies in order to bring issues such as eligibility for benefits, or “who gets what,” to the fore. In addition to examining the average monthly benefit payment in 1990, I examine the overall change in state welfare rolls between 1993 and 1999 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2000c). The average state's welfare population decreased by almost 57 percent during this time period. These changes serve as a proxy both for the effect of welfare reform on program

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beneficiaries and the effort policymakers have invested in reducing the number of people in their state receiving benefits.

These two indicators represent quite different aspects of welfare policy-making. The change in the number of clients served by a state reflects government judgments about how many people it is willing to subsidize and for how long. The spending variable, on the other hand, indicates the treatment this pool of beneficiaries will receive, once it is defined. However, given that these indicators are rooted in government policy decisions, similar forces such as public opinion and symbolic politics could influence each. My expectation is that welfare policymakers will be responsive to public opinion, measured by *Racial Tolerance* and *Welfare Attitudes*, as well as the racial composition of state welfare recipients measured by the percentage of AFDC families in 1990 headed by an African American (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1994).<sup>6</sup> Racial composition measures are often included in an analysis of this kind as a proxy for attitudes about African American welfare recipients (Fording, this vol., chap. 3). However, here it allows us to examine the response of policymakers to the composition of welfare populations independent of these attitudes, as well as the cumulative effects of racial composition on public policy discussed by Hero (1998).

This analysis also incorporates factors found elsewhere to affect welfare policy in the states (Howard 1999). Some students of state public policy have found socioeconomic factors to dominate welfare policy-making (Dye 1984), while others have combined socioeconomic and political variables in more complex models explaining welfare policies (Plotnick and Winters 1985). I include socioeconomic variables similar to controls used by Hero (1998): *Per capita Personal Income*, *Urbanization*, and *Education* (U.S. Department of Commerce 1999). The models also contain political characteristics thought to influence social policy, namely *Party Competition* (Cnudde and McCrone 1969; Holbrook and Van Dunk 1993) and voter turnout among less affluent citizens—*Low SES Turnout* (Hill, Leighley, and Hinton-Andersson 1995).

Students of welfare policy have also found a relationship between social spending and political ideology. Left-leaning states are more supportive of expansive welfare policies than more conservative states (Hill, Leighley, and Hinton-Andersson 1995). Consequently, the models reported below include measures of *Elite Ideology* and *Mass Ideology* provided by Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993). Finally, Howard's (1999) review of scholarship on welfare in the American states emphasizes the importance of need and state capacity as influences on state wel-



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fare policy. A state with a high *Poverty Rate* may have a greater objective need for welfare relief, but its policymakers may fear attracting more impoverished people and be less progressive in their provision of welfare benefits (Peterson 1995). Governments with greater administrative capacity are more capable of managing social programs and thus more likely to develop them (Skocpol 1992). I use *Bureaucratic Professionalism* as a tracer for state capacity, measured as a state government's total payroll by its number of full-time equivalent employees (U.S. Department of Commerce 1992).

Table 6.2 reports regression models testing each of these explanations for both welfare recipient benefit payments and the percentage change in the number of people on welfare in each state. Even controlling for com-

**TABLE 6.2. Racial Composition, White Public Attitudes, and Other Explanations for Welfare Effort**

	Average Monthly Benefit		Change in Welfare Rolls	
	Slope	SE	Slope	SE
Percent AFDC Black	-1.159**	(0.672)	-0.202*	(0.126)
Racial Tolerance	248.664*	(159.347)	-9.453	(30.027)
Welfare Spending	-390.168	(403.144)	159.751**	(75.967)
Socioeconomic				
Per Capita Income	0.0003	(0.009)	0.003**	(0.002)
Urbanization	-0.015	(0.980)	-0.089	(0.185)
Education	-3.533	(7.472)	-1.770	(1.408)
Ideology				
Mass Ideology	5.584*	(3.429)	-0.682	(0.646)
Elite Ideology	7.434	(16.086)	0.144	(3.031)
Political				
Party Competition	0.569	(1.500)	-0.087	(0.283)
Turnout (Low SES)	5.062***	(1.362)	0.219	(0.256)
Need				
Poverty	-1.018	(4.837)	0.074	(0.912)
Capacity				
Bureaucratic Professionalism	0.069	(0.054)	0.010	(0.010)
Constant	49.059	(200.729)	-136.788***	(37.824)
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.832		Adj. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.200	

Note: N = 42. Table reports OLS coefficients for models weighted by the number of respondents included in the GSS cumulative file, 1974-98.

\*p < 0.10    \*\*p < 0.05    \*\*\*p < 0.001 (one-tailed tests)

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plementary and alternative explanations of welfare policy-making, race, racial attitudes, and public beliefs about welfare spending are influential to the decisions of state policymakers. Support for the social inclusion of African Americans and the racial composition of welfare recipients influence benefit payments, while welfare spending attitudes have a large impact on the overall pace of welfare reform in a state.

*State Welfare Spending*

The first two columns of table 6.2 report regression results for *Welfare Spending*. The model explains more than four-fifths of the variation in state welfare benefit levels (adj.  $R^2 = 0.83$ ). State welfare spending per recipient has little to do with public judgments about how much the government should spend on welfare. Instead, policymakers appear responsive to the racial attitudes of their constituents and the proportion of minorities among program beneficiaries. Beyond these racially oriented influences on policymakers, state mass ideology, voting behavior, and administrative capacity appear to have strong influences on state benefit levels. These variables are included in the reduced model of monthly benefit payments in table 6.3. In states where white residents have progressive attitudes about the social integration of African Americans, welfare payments are higher than they are in states with white residents less friendly to social inclusion. States with residents who tend to have a left-leaning political ideology, with high rates of voting among people with lower socioeconomic status, or with greater bureaucratic capacity are

**TABLE 6.3. Reduced Average Monthly Benefit Model**

	Average Monthly Benefit		Standardized Slope
	Slope	SE	
Percent AFDC Black	-1.275**	(0.502)	-.189
Racial Tolerance	207.807**	(117.624)	.155
Mass Ideology	7.353***	(1.989)	.370
Low SES Turnout	4.509***	(1.174)	.252
Bureaucratic Professionalism	0.087**	(0.035)	.274
Constant	-18.699	(124.191)	
Adj. $R^2 = 0.845$			

Note:  $N = 43$ . Table reports OLS coefficients for models weighted by the number of respondents included in the GSS cumulative file, 1974–98.

\* $p < 0.10$     \*\* $p < 0.05$     \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed tests)

associated with higher welfare benefit levels. States with larger percentages of African Americans on their welfare rolls offer systematically lower welfare benefit payments.

In order to better characterize the influence of the racial composition of states on monthly benefits, figure 6.1 graphs a causal diagram (Asher 1976) incorporating the relevant regression results presented in this chapter. The model includes the standardized regression coefficients from the reduced model shown in table 6.3, and the regression predicting interracial contacting reported in note 4. State policymakers' direct response to the presence of minorities on its welfare rolls is captured by the standardized regression coefficient between that variable and the welfare benefit payment. The indirect effects of racial composition are estimated as the product of each standardized coefficients on the path through which the variable of interest moves. The total effect of the racial composition of states on welfare benefit payments is the sum of these direct and indirect effects.

The sum of the path products between percentage of a state's residents who are African American and welfare benefit payments, mediated by interracial contact, black AFDC participation, and racial attitudes, is  $-0.22$ . A one-standard-deviation increase in a state's African American population is associated with a decrease in welfare spending by about one-fifth of a standard deviation. Translated into meaningful units, this suggests that a 9.34 percent increase in the number of African Americans in a state would be associated with a \$10.25 decrease in the state's monthly welfare payment. This is more than an 8 percent cut in the average monthly benefit a welfare recipient received in 1990, \$121.25.

### *Changing Welfare Rolls*

Table 6.2 also shows that the cumulative results of state policymakers' efforts to reform welfare and reduce the number of beneficiaries in a state are responsive to white attitudes about welfare spending.<sup>7</sup> Where aggregate public opinion supports increased spending on social programs, state policymakers have been less vigorous in their efforts to lean welfare rolls. With all variables set to their average values, the regression equation predicts the average state would see a 55.1 percent reduction in the number of clients served by welfare programs. Other things equal, when support for welfare spending is set to its lowest observed level, the model predicts a 79.6 percent reduction in the number of beneficiaries. However, where state residents think government should spend more on wel-

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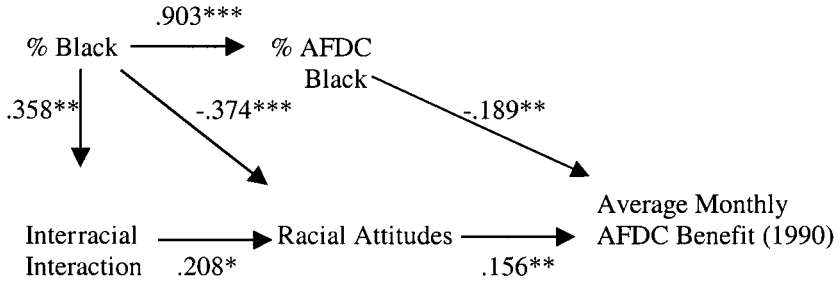


Fig. 6.1. Average monthly welfare benefit causal model. Diagram includes path coefficients from tables 6.1 and 6.3 and note 4. The racial composition of a state's AFDC recipient population is based on the race of the head of household or in child-only cases, the race of the youngest child of the unit. (Source: Lower-Basch 2000.) \* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$  (one-tailed tests).

fare, this model predicts a less aggressive reform effort, the removal of 41.0 percent of recipients from the state's welfare program.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined two distinct aspects of welfare policy-making: the cumulative result of efforts to reduce welfare rolls and the average size of cash assistance benefits themselves. The overall picture presented here suggests that politics of welfare are not entirely dominated by racial concerns, but that race clearly matters to state policymakers. Outcomes associated with welfare reform and many policy choices are influenced by what appear to be ideological public judgments and are not as strongly determined by the racial attitudes of the white public. Public judgments about social spending establish an appropriate size for a state's welfare system and, given their increased authority under TANF, how aggressive each should be in removing people from the system.

However, the politics of race strongly affect how the population of beneficiaries, once defined, is treated. For example, the actual size of the benefit payment each receives is related to race. Consistent with Hero's (1998) proposition that racial politics has a pervasive, cumulative effect on state policy outputs and social outcomes and my expectation that policymakers react to the presence of minorities in the population of welfare recipients in addition to white attitudes about race, the racial composition of the pool of welfare clients has a large independent effect on facets

of welfare and welfare reform in the states. And as Gilens's research underscores, welfare remains a "racialized" policy, perceived as benefiting mostly African Americans and other nonwhites. This affects the treatment of program clients.

The white majority in the United States appears to be quite sensitive to the presence of racial minorities. This sensitivity manifests itself both in increased hostility toward minorities as they increase in number. However, whites are also more likely to support the social inclusion of minorities when they have an opportunity to meet and interact with them, as the literature on racial contacting suggests. Holding everything else constant, the total effect of increased diversity on racial attitudes is a reduction of support among whites for racial integration, consistent with the group threat hypothesis.

The results reported in this chapter have important implications for the study of the responsiveness of state governments to public opinion. State governments are quite representative of public preferences. This responsiveness is as multifaceted as public opinion itself. However, a troubling impression that emerges from the evidence presented here is that policymakers are primarily responsive to the expressed will of the white majority. Given the limitations of this source of opinion data,<sup>8</sup> we are still unable to determine the extent to which state policymakers are responsive to the preferences and needs of their minority constituents. That said, it appears that policymakers have a different relationship with the racial majority in their states than the racial minority: They *respond* to whites and *react* to the presence of African Americans.

#### APPENDIX: INDICES AND ITEMS

*Racial Tolerance.* This measure uses five GSS items about the appropriateness of various forms of racial integration (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .710$ ):

"Do you think white and black students should go to the same school?"

0 = No, 0.5 = DK, 1 = Yes

"Blacks should not push where they are not wanted." 0 = Agree, 0.5 = NA, 1 = Disagree

"Do you think there should be a law against marriages between members of different races?" 1 = No, 0.5 = Don't Know, 0 = Yes

"White people have a right to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods if they want to." 0 = Agree, 0.5 = NA, 1 = Disagree

"How strongly would you object if a member of your family wanted to bring a black person to dinner?" 0 = Strongly/Mild, 0.5 = DK, 1 = Not Strongly

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The individual-level index is the respondent's average answer across the five items and ranges between 0 and 1, with 1 representing strong support for integration. These individual scores were then averaged for all respondents in each state. Thus, a straightforward interpretation of the absolute values of this scale is not possible. We can only speak in relative terms about states and their scores on the index and recognize that a state scoring a 0.83 (Oregon) has more aggregate support for racial integration than a state with a score of 0.38 (Alabama).

*Welfare Spending.* Aggregate support for welfare is computed using the mean state response to the question:

"We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. Are we spending too much money, too little money, or about the right amount on welfare?" 1 = too little; 0.5 = right amount, don't know; 0 = too much money.

*Intergroup Interaction.* For almost two decades, the NORC has asked white respondents about their social contact and experience with blacks. More recently, they have directed these questions to members of all races. For this study, however, I considered only the white respondents in the cumulative file. I calculated an index averaging white responses to these contacting questions (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .379$ ):

"Do (Blacks/Negroes/African Americans)/Whites attend the church that you, yourself, attend most often, or not?" Yes, attend; No, do not attend; No church; Don't know; No answer.

"During the last few years, has anyone in your family brought a friend who was a (Negro/Black/African American) home for dinner?" Yes; No; Don't Know; No answer.

"Are there any (Negroes/Blacks/African Americans) living in this neighborhood now?" Yes; No; Don't Know; No answer.

Affirmative responses to these questions were coded 1, indicating that either church, dining, or neighborhood of residence provided a venue for interracial association. All other responses were coded 0.

*Auditing the Measures*

In order to calculate the appropriate split-half reliability and stability tests for each of these measures (Carmines and Zeller 1979; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993), the GSS file was divided into early (1974-85) and late (1986-98) samples, as well as divided into even and odd years. Pearson's  $r$  correlations between the even- and odd-year sample halves were used to calculate the reliability of measures, while early and late period scores were used to establish their stability. These were converted into stability and reliability statistics via the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula:

$$\text{Spearman - Brown} = \frac{2r_{12}}{1 + r_{12}}.$$

The Spearman-Brown statistics indicate that racial attitudes are measured reliably (.95), as are instances of interracial contact (.78), with the welfare attitudes measure appearing less reliable (.68). Self-reported interracial interaction is less stable (.68) than racial attitudes (.88). There is no significant correlation between early and late welfare scores in the states.

However, in addition to these measures of reliability, Jones and Norrander (1996) recommend a generalizability diagnostic test for aggregate-level data created from individual-level observations. One-way ANOVA was used to determine the mean sums of squares between aggregate units, as well as the mean sums of squares within aggregate units, and

$$E_p^2 = \frac{MS(a) - MS(r : a)}{MS(a)}.$$

where  $MS(a)$  is the mean between sums of squares and  $MS(r : a)$  is the mean within sums of squares. The test suggests the extent to which each measure is generalizable: *Racial Tolerance*,  $E^2 = .98$ , and *Interracial Interaction*,  $E^2 = .97$ , appear quite generalizable. *Welfare Attitudes* has a more modest score on this generalizability measure,  $E^2 = .58$ . Together these tests suggest that we should be particularly cautious drawing inferences based on the aggregate measure of white attitudes toward welfare presented here. However, given the present paucity of alternative public opinion measures and its performance in the models reported, *Welfare Attitudes* will suffice for now, pending future innovations in the estimation of state public attitudes about social programs.

#### NOTES

1. Following Jones and Norrander (1996) and Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993), Brace and his coauthors (2002) create a variety of indicators of public opinion in the states. While this provides researchers access to new public opinion measures, they are limited to subset of GSS questions that have been asked regularly over the years and on those issues for which public opinion can be demonstrated reliable and generalizable. Also, most of the analyses in this study are limited to data from 42 states because the GSS cumulative file (1974–98) contains insufficient responses from Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, and Wyoming to compute each of the public opinion and self-reported behavior variables used.

2. While this index is not a direct measure of prejudice or acceptance of

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racial stereotypes, the works cited suggest it can be a valid surrogate for racial views, specifically whether white respondents are more or less supportive of racial integration. The choice of this measure was also driven by the frequent recurrence of these five questions in the GSS since the early 1970s. It would be beneficial to have more items about racial stereotypes and white attitudes toward other racial groups, but I am constrained by the availability of data in the GSS.

3. Because these public opinion indicators are averages of individual responses at the state level, regressions reported in this chapter using the aggregate opinion scores are inversely weighted by the number respondents the GSS has drawn from in each state over time. As Brace et al. (2002) discuss, the size of the state samples or the number of primary sampling units the GSS has used in each state is a potential source of nonconstant error variance in models utilizing this aggregate opinion data. Weighting the models with the state sample sizes is intended to address this concern (Gujarati 1992). However, the results of these weighted regressions are substantively quite similar to unweighted models (Johnson 2001).

4. Interracial interaction is itself influenced by the racial composition of states. Controlling for socioeconomic characteristics of states (Hero 1998, 37), contact between white and black state residents increases in states with larger African American populations.

	Interracial Interaction		
	Slope	SE	Standardized Slope
Percent Black	0.004**	(0.001)	0.357
Urbanization	0.001	(0.001)	0.154
Education	0.016**	(0.006)	0.401
Per Capita Income (in thousands)	0.007	(0.007)	0.219
Constant	-0.055	(0.081)	
Adj. $R^2 = 0.418$			

Note:  $N = 44$

\*\* $p < 0.05$  (one-tailed tests)

5. Johnson (2001) also reports a 2SLS analysis that supports his contention that interracial interaction has a greater effect on racial attitudes than these have on an individual's propensity to engage members of other races. After purging each measure of the effects of the other, racial attitudes are not a significant predictor of contacting behavior, while the hypothesized influence of contacting on racial attitudes remains.

6. The percentage of state populations made up of African Americans is strongly related to the percentage of AFDC recipients who are black (Pearson's  $r = 0.903$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

7. While it would be preferable to present a fully dynamic model of change in welfare rolls over time, there is precedent in public policy literature for the cau-



tious use of cross-sectional data in making inferences about dynamic processes (Feiock 1991).

8. While the GSS has frequently oversampled black populations, there are insufficient observations available to use in order to generate measures of aggregate black attitudes about whites at the state level, although the GSS appears useful in estimating the attitudes of black respondents in selected metropolitan areas (Gibson 1995).