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Exploring the Racial Divide: Blacks, Whites, and Opinion on National Policy

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Black and white Americans disagree consistently and often substantially in their views on national policy. This racial divide is most pronounced on policies that intrude conspicuously on the fortunes of blacks and whites, but it is also apparent on a wide array of social welfare issues where race is less obviously in play. Our analysis takes up the question of *why* blacks and whites differ so markedly, distinguishing among four alternative interpretations: one centers attention on underlying differences of class, another on political principles, a third on social identity, and the fourth on audience. Our results are complicated but coherent. We discuss their implications for the meaning of group interest, speculate on the conditions under which the racial divide might close (or widen) in the foreseeable future, and suggest why we should not wish racial differences in opinion to disappear.

In their famous attempt to understand why Americans vote as they do, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet concluded that “a person thinks, politically, as he is socially. Social characteristics determine political preferences” (1948, 27). If this conclusion is too sweeping, if the translation of social cleavages into political differences is hardly automatic (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), it would be foolish to deny that the one often arises from the other. An excellent case in point, one that is our focus here, is provided by race. Beginning with Constitutional arguments over the definition of citizenship on up to contemporary arguments over affirmative action and fair representation, race has been and remains today a central theme of American political life.

We know that blacks and whites differ systematically and often substantially in their outlook on politics. But if racial differences in public opinion are well documented (e.g., Jackman 1994; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Schuman et al. 1997; Sigelman and Welch 1991; Tate 1994), the differences are not that well understood. *Why* do black and white Americans disagree?

Research on race and public opinion, though ample and in many respects illuminating, has for the most not focused on explaining racial difference. Much of this work is preoccupied with understanding the views of white Americans (e.g., Sniderman and Piazza 1993), perhaps persuaded by Myrdal's (1944) argument that the problem of race in America resides within the hearts and minds of whites. Another and increasingly important

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line of research takes the political opinions of black Americans to be the proper subject (e.g., Dawson 1994). Still a third approach undertakes side-by-side analysis of blacks and whites (e.g., Kinder and Sanders 1996; Bobo and Kluegel 1993), motivated at least in part by an interest in whether black and white opinion can be understood in the same terms. A sizable fraction of this literature is instructive on its chosen topics, and some of the empirical regularities that it has generated inform our project. But almost none of it directly addresses the specific question of racial difference that we wrestle with here. The major exception comes from Jackman (1994), who compares racial differences in opinion with the corresponding differences that arise from class and gender. Operating at the group level, her analysis complements our own, and we will discuss it at the conclusion of our paper.

Our purpose, in short, is to offer an empirically grounded account of the meaning of racial differences in opinion. To do so we analyze black and white opinion together, examining the racial divide in public opinion through four different lenses, four alternative and quite general ways that the racial divide in opinion might be understood: (1) as a reflection of differences between blacks and whites in *social class*; (2) as an expression of differences between blacks and whites over fundamental *principles*; (3) as a consequence of differences in *social identity*, differences between blacks and whites in the attachments they feel toward their own racial group and in the resentments they feel toward each other; and (4) as due to differences in the *audience* to which blacks and whites address their opinions. Our object is to see how far these alternative interpretations can take us in accounting for the racial divide.

With this ambition in mind, our first order of business is to describe the scope and magnitude of the contemporary racial divide in opinion. We present racial differences on policies that bear directly and plainly on race (e.g., affirmative action), and, for comparison, on social welfare policy where race is much less obviously relevant (e.g., government health insurance). Then we justify our framework—why interpretations centering on class, principles, identity, and audience should be taken seriously—and introduce our measures. Next, in the heart of the article, using recent national survey data, we determine how well these various interpretations fare. At the end of the article, informed by these results, we comment on the meaning of group interest, speculate over the mechanisms by which the racial divide might close (or widen) in the foreseeable future, and, finally, suggest why we should not necessarily wish racial differences in opinion to disappear.

The Racial Divide in Contemporary American Public Opinion

To describe and then account for the racial divide in public opinion, we rely primarily on the 1992 American National Election Study (NES).¹ The 1992 NES carried out interviews with 1,883 white and 289 black respondents, numbers sufficient to support our analysis.² And it includes the instrumentation that our analysis requires: first, an ample complement of questions on national policy, so that we can portray faithfully and comprehensively the shape of the racial divide; and second, adequate measures of class, identity, principles, and audience, so that we can undertake a rich exploration of its meaning.

Table 1 provides a summary view, as of the fall of 1992, of the racial divide in opinion. At the top of the table appear six policy proposals that bear unambiguously on race. The first two address whether the government should ensure equal opportunity between blacks and whites, first in employment and second in education. The next pair takes up the general role the federal government should play in providing assistance to blacks. One refers to federal spending on programs that help blacks; the other to the government's efforts to improve blacks' social and economic position. Finally, the third pair touches on the debate over affirmative action, first in hiring and promotion and second in quotas in college admissions.

The differences between African Americans and whites on these questions are huge. For example, whereas 89.2 percent of African Americans in 1992 supported the idea that the government in Washington should see to it that black people get fair treatment in jobs, just 48.7 percent of whites did so. This contrast exemplifies the general pattern: overwhelming majorities of black Americans supporting the liberal option; majorities of white Americans opposing it. On these matters, opinion differences between blacks and whites add up to more than a gap or a mere disagreement. They constitute a *divide*.

These differences are not confined to issues of race. Blacks and whites also differ sharply over a variety of domestic programs, none of which explicitly invokes race. When asked if they would rather see an expansion of gov-

¹For further details on the 1992 NES, see the ICPSR codebook, study number 6067. We have carried out replications of all major portions of the analysis reported here with the 1988 NES as well. These results are consistent with the findings from the 1992 and are available on request.

²Following standard practice, we relied on the judgment of interviewers to identify survey participants' race.

TABLE 1 The Racial Divide in Public Opinion

Issue	Blacks	Whites	Difference
Race			
Government Should Ensure Equal Employment Opportunity	89.2%	48.7%	40.5%
Government Should See to School Desegregation	76.6	39.9	36.7
Federal Spending on Programs that Assist Blacks	69.3	18.0	51.3
Government Should Make Special Efforts to Help Blacks	42.4	19.2	23.2
Preferential Hiring	55.9	13.3	42.6
College Quotas	75.6	24.8	50.8
Social Welfare			
Expand Government Services vs. Cut Spending	66.9	33.6	33.3
Federal Spending on Education	84.2	62.9	21.3
Federal Spending for the Poor	81.4	50.8	30.6
Federal Spending for College Financial Aid	79.5	57.7	21.8
Federal Spending for the Unemployed	68.3	34.6	33.8
Federal Spending for the Homeless	88.5	70.4	18.2
Government Provision of Health Insurance	61.3	49.6	11.7
Government Provision of Jobs	53.9	26.7	27.2

Source: 1992 National Election Study.

Entries are the percentage of blacks/whites who give the liberal response for each issue, excluding those who said that they had no opinion. Calculated using sampling weights to adjust for the probability of selection into the sample (NES variable 3008).

ernment services or cuts in federal spending, for example, about one third (33.6 percent) of white Americans chose more services; nearly twice the proportion (66.9 percent) of African Americans did so. Differences of about this magnitude show up on all the various forms of social welfare policy presented in Table 1: government health insurance, the obligation of the government in Washington to guarantee Americans employment and an adequate standard of living, federal spending on education, and more. Blacks are always more liberal than whites, and the differences are substantial.

In short, while the racial divide is most pronounced over policies that bear unambiguously and differentially on the fortunes of blacks and whites, it is also apparent on a wide array of social welfare policies where race seems much less present. It is large not only in absolute terms but also by comparison: political differences associated with class and gender are less imposing and far-reaching (Jackman 1994; Kinder and Sanders 1996). The policies presented in Table 1 vary in their substance and popularity, from Social Security, on the one side, to racial preferences in hiring, on the other. But they share at least one thing in common: a large difference of opinion between black and white Americans, a racial divide.³

³Blacks and whites also disagree sharply on "covert" racial issues, those that do not explicitly mention race, but which are widely understood to have a racial implication (e.g., federal support for the Food Stamps program or remedies for urban unrest). On other

Alternative Interpretations of the Racial Divide

Under one framework, public opinion on any particular issue can be explained by a small set of primary causes: the material interests that citizens see at stake in the issue; the sympathies and resentments that citizens feel toward the social groups that the issue implicates; and commitment to the political principles that the issue seems to honor or repudiate (Kinder 1998).⁴

This framework was erected to organize the vast and unruly empirical literature devoted to public opinion. It amounts to a set of claims about motivation, about what citizens want from politics. It therefore resembles other accounts of political motivation, developed with somewhat different focal problems in mind. In his well-known analysis of political organizations, for example, Wilson (1995) distinguished among three types of incentives that

kinds of policy debates, however, race differences are much less impressive. Social issues, for example, do not seem to produce a consistent racial divide. Nor do the new issues that have arisen over the recent arrival of immigrants from Latin and South America and the Pacific rim. Nor, finally, does a racial gap invariably show up on foreign policy. For a more comprehensive summary of the racial divide in opinion, see Kinder and Sanders (1996); and Schuman et al. (1997).

⁴Ideology appears explicitly in this framework under the category of principles. The ideological foundations of opinion are revealed insofar as opinions on particular topics are based in principles.

draw citizens to political parties and interest groups: material incentives, by which Wilson meant such tangible rewards as reductions in taxes, improvements in property values and so on; solidary incentives, reflecting the conviviality of group membership; and purposive incentives, which derive from the sense of satisfaction of having contributed to the attainment of a noble goal. Our framework also brings to mind Sen's analysis of human motivation, presented as a stinging rebuke to his fellow economists. In "Rational Fools" (1990), Sen insists that people are motivated by more than sheer egoism, that their choices also routinely reflect sympathy for others as well as commitment to moral principles. If not quite perfect, the correspondence between these formulations and our own is sufficiently strong to suggest that it may be usefully applied to the puzzle of the racial divide.

So if, as we say, interests, attitudes toward social groups, and political principles are the core ingredients of public opinion in general, then they should go a long way in helping us understand the racial divide in particular. To these three considerations we add a fourth: audience. The formulation and expression of opinion always takes place in a social context, of course, but in the case before us here social context seems especially important. In particular, we suggest that what Americans have to say on national policy regarding race may depend on the race of the person with whom they are speaking.

Material Interests and Social Class

The notion that citizens seek to advance their own material interests enjoys a special prominence in contemporary analysis of American political life, much of it animated by what Barry (1978) has called the "economic approach" to democratic theory. From this theoretical position, citizens are single-minded seekers of self-interest: they support policies and candidates that advance their own material interests, and they oppose policies and candidates that threaten them. The assumption of self-interest also energizes the dominant sociological interpretation of politics. In this view, "the party struggle is a conflict among classes, and the most impressive single fact about political party support is that in virtually every economically developed country the lower-income groups vote mainly for parties of the left, while the higher-income groups vote mainly for the parties of the right" (Lipset 1963, 234). And classes do so, it is widely assumed, for reasons of "simple economic self-interest" (Lipset 1963, 239).

These lines of argument suggest that what seems to be a racial divide in opinion may actually be a divide of class. Our measure of class gives primacy to the command of objective economic and social resources: income, edu-

cation, and wealth (Jackman and Jackman 1983).⁵ Class, measured this way, is a strong candidate to explain the racial divide, on two grounds. First, class is a reasonable proxy for interests, and interests are, from several theoretical perspectives, the primary motive behind political opinion. Second, and just as important, class and race are correlated. To account for the racial divide in opinion, we must identify factors that predict opinion *and* that differentiate whites from blacks. Class fulfills the latter condition well, as shown in Table 2. In the 1992 NES whites occupy significantly higher class locations, on average, than do African Americans: for example, 68.9 percent of whites own their home compared to just 45.9 percent of African Americans. Differences of this magnitude and importance suggest that the racial divide in opinion might really be a division of class. We'll see.

Social Identity: Sympathy and Resentment toward Social Groups

Citizens propelled entirely by calculations of self-interest would be, in Sen's memorable phrase, "social morons" (1990, 336). On the subversive idea that citizens are not social morons, our framework also takes into account attitudes toward social groups. Under this interpretation, the racial divide is primarily an expression of differences between blacks and whites in the attachments they feel toward their own racial group and the resentments they feel toward each other.

The implication of this argument is that we need measures of two concepts: identification with the racial in-group (e.g., Gurin, Miller, and Gurin 1980) and resentment (or sympathy) toward the out-group (e.g., Merton and Rossi 1968). For the former, we developed a three-point measure of closeness to the in-group (taken to be "whites" for white respondents and "blacks" for African American respondents). Respondents were coded as 0 if they said that they did not feel close to their own racial group; 0.5 if they chose their own group as among those they felt close to; and they were coded as 1.0 if they chose their own group as the one group to which they felt the closest of all.⁶

To measure attitudes toward the out-group, we turned first to the so-called thermometer-rating scale, where respondents are asked to reveal their feelings toward various social and political objects by placing each on a 101-point scale. The scale ranges in principle from 0, meaning very cold feelings, to 100, meaning very warm

⁵ Operationalized as family income (logged), respondent education, and home ownership, each scaled zero to one.

⁶ Variable numbers 926205, 926215, and 926218.

TABLE 2 Differences between Blacks and Whites on Class, Principles, and Social Identity

Variable	n	Whites Mean	SD	n	Blacks Mean	SD	Difference
Social Class							
Homeowner	1,949	0.689	0.463	296	0.459	0.499	0.229
Income (logged)	1,912	0.653	0.221	282	0.530	0.250	0.123
Education	2,019	0.482	0.280	314	0.389	0.270	0.093
Principles							
Egalitarianism	1,871	0.622	0.194	286	0.779	0.173	-0.158
Limited government	1,856	0.378	0.378	283	0.143	0.221	0.235
Social Identity							
In-group identification	1,706	0.248	0.290	266	0.609	0.349	-0.361
Out-group resentment (t-scores)	1,827	0.371	0.234	275	0.336	0.277	0.035
Racial resentment	1,870	0.611	0.281	285	0.366	0.217	0.245

Source: 1992 National Election Study. All variables coded 0–1.

feelings. Of the social groups appearing on the thermometer list, our analysis picks up whites' rating of blacks and blacks' rating of whites, re-scaled to run from 0 (most sympathetic) to 1.0 (most hostile).⁷

The thermometer scale is a useful all-purpose measure, but it would be unwise to imagine that it can do all the work we ask of it. In particular, the history of race in America—marked by entrenched patterns of discrimination, segregation, and prejudice—suggests that the representation of racial attitudes may require more than what the simple thermometer ratings can supply. Thus at several points ahead we replace it with the racial resentment scale (Kinder and Sanders 1996). The four questions that contribute to this scale distinguish those whites who are generally sympathetic towards blacks from those who resent the failure of blacks, as they see it, to demonstrate the virtues of self-reliance and hard work (e.g., “It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites”).⁸

The various measures of group identity are displayed in the middle panel of Table 2, once again separately for blacks and whites. As shown there, blacks were much more likely than whites to choose their own race as the

group they felt closest to (37.6 percent of African Americans versus only 4.3 percent of whites), while differences are mixed for out-group attitudes: modest racial differences on the thermometer scale, large differences on racial resentment.

Matters of Principle

Public opinion may also have a principled base. From this perspective, policies are supported or opposed to the degree they are seen as enhancing or violating valued principles. We examine two principles in particular, selected because they are regularly and prominently featured in influential descriptions of the American political tradition (e.g., Hofstadter 1948; Pole 1993): equality and limited government. From this point of view, the racial divide in opinion can be traced to a perhaps deeper divide over principles: specifically, over the meaning and importance of equality; and over the proper role of government in economic and social affairs.

To measure the idea of equality, we made use of six questions developed by Feldman (1988) and carried in the 1992 NES. These questions are abstract; none refers to any specific policy; and though they address different aspects of equality, most are concerned with equality of opportunity (e.g., “Our society should do whatever is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed”). This measure of equality has been shown to predict opinion on a wide range of policies (e.g., Feldman 1988; Kinder and Sanders 1996).⁹

⁷Variable numbers 925323 and 925333. Interpersonal comparisons of survey responses using the thermometer scales raise difficult issues, because different individuals use the response scale in different ways (Brady 1985; Winter and Berinsky 1999). To cope with this problem, we created a normalized version of thermometer scores, but this made almost no difference to our results (available on request).

⁸Variable numbers 926126–926129, averaged and scaled to run from zero (most sympathetic) to one (most resentful). Respondents who answered fewer than half of the items were excluded from the scale. Cronbach’s *alpha* for the linear composite is 0.75.

⁹Variables 926024–926029, scaled following the same procedures as racial resentment, to run from zero (least egalitarian) to one (most egalitarian). For whites, *alpha* for the scale is 0.71, for African Americans it is 0.66.

Opposition to government power also occupies an important place in contemporary American opinion (e.g., Feldman and Zaller 1992; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1976). To investigate the impact of the principle of limited government on the racial divide, we made use of instrumentation developed by Markus (1993) and included in the 1992 NES. Like the equality battery, these questions are also formulated quite abstractly; each inquires whether a strong central government is desirable (e.g., “we need a strong government to handle today’s complex economic problems” versus “the free market can handle these problems without government being involved”).¹⁰

On both principles—equal opportunity and limited government—sharp racial differences emerge (see Table 2). Black Americans are much more enthusiastic about equality than are white Americans, regardless of the particular kind of equality in question (for example, while 36.9 percent of white Americans agreed strongly that “if people were treated more equally in this country we would have far fewer problems,” 63.1 percent of black Americans did so). At the same time, the idea that government should be constrained is much more popular among whites than among blacks (for example, 37.4 percent of whites subscribed to the view that the less government the better, as against just 10.8 percent of African Americans). That blacks and whites differ so sharply on the importance of equality and on the role of government suggest that the meaning of the racial divide in opinion may be bound up, at least in part, in principles.

Audience

Public opinion depends not only on interests, group feelings, and principles, but also, in part, on who’s listening: on the audience that citizens appear to have in mind as they formulate and express their views. Especially relevant to the racial divide in opinion is the audience’s racial composition. In fact, black Americans tend to express more liberal positions on race policy when interviewed by blacks than when questioned by whites, while white Americans interviewed by whites generally appear more conservative on matters of race policy than when they are interviewed by blacks (e.g., Anderson, Silver, and Abramson 1988a, 1988b; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sanders 1995; Freedman 1999; Schaeffer 1980; Hatchett and Schuman 1975–1976; Schuman and Converse 1971).

Race-of-interviewer effects such as these are often treated as methodological annoyances, problems to be

fixed, either through statistical correction or by minimizing the problem in the first place by ensuring that blacks are interviewed only by blacks and whites only by whites. In this view, a respondent’s “true attitude” is obscured by an artifact of the process we use to measure it. This is a useful way to look at it, but it is not the position we take here. Rather, we see the process of expressing an attitude as an integral part of the attitude itself. People do not have fixed attitudes in their heads that they retrieve on command; rather, they construct attitudes on the fly from the considerations that come to mind—in everyday conversation as in a survey interview (Feldman 1989; Zaller 1992; Zaller and Feldman 1992). From this perspective, it is impossible to have an attitude independent of a social context in which it is elicited. Therefore, taking context into account can tell us much about public opinion.¹¹

Like Schuman and Converse, we suggest that race-of-interviewer effects “deserve to be treated as a fact of social life and not merely as an artifact of the survey interview” (1971, 248). More specifically, we regard the racial context of the interview conversation (see Schwarz 1996 on the interview as conversation) as an opportunity to explore a somewhat different but equally important root of the racial divide. We suggest that interactions between the race of the interviewer and the race of the respondent reproduce some important aspects of the forces governing the development and expression of public opinion in a racially conscious society. Integrated settings appear to produce moderation in opinion, from blacks and whites alike. This implies that in a world in which African Americans converse with white Americans, and white Americans talk to African Americans, the racial divide in opinion would diminish. Our purpose here will be to see if that turns out to hold for the special and temporary world of the 1992 National Election Study.

Accounting for the Racial Divide

In order to gauge how completely interests, principles, group identity, and audience account for the racial divide in opinion, we first require a precise estimate of the di-

¹⁰Variables 925729–925731, scaled to run from zero (least supportive of limited government) to one (most supportive). For white Americans, *alpha* is 0.72. For black Americans *alpha* for the scale is a terrible 0.29.

¹¹Even if attitudes are treated as entirely distinct from the context of their expression, changes in context could affect opinion. Bem (1967) argues that people learn their own attitudes partly by observing the attitudes they express; if this is true, then conversation in a context that causes one to *express* different attitudes would eventually feed back to alter the underlying attitudes themselves. Perceptions of the general climate of opinion also influence individual opinion formation and expression (Mutz 1998; Noelle-Neumann 1993), suggesting yet another path for context effects to feed back to “actual” opinions.

vide itself. To produce one we coded all the policy variables to the 0–1 scale, where 1 is the most liberal option and 0 is the most conservative, and took the difference between mean black opinion and mean white opinion. This difference of means is the “raw” racial divide: the divide in opinion between blacks and whites unencumbered by controls for class differences, or by differences in political outlook, or indeed by anything else.¹²

We want to compare the racial divide in raw form with our best guess of what the racial divide would look like under various hypothetical circumstances. To generate our best guess, we first estimated a series of regression equations, one for each policy, which formalized the notion that opinion is a reflection of class, principles, identity, and audience:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Opinion} = & b_0 + b_1 \text{Education} + b_2 \text{Family Income} \\ & + b_3 \text{Home Ownership} + b_4 \text{Equal Opportunity} \\ & + b_5 \text{Limited Government} + b_6 \text{In-group} \\ & \text{Identification} + b_7 \text{Out-group Resentment} \\ & + b_8 \text{Race of Interviewer} + b_9 \text{Race} + b_{10} (\text{Education} \\ & \times \text{Race}) + b_{11} (\text{Family Income} \times \text{Race}) \\ & + b_{12} (\text{Home Ownership} \times \text{Race}) + b_{13} (\text{Equal} \\ & \text{Opportunity} \times \text{Race}) + b_{14} (\text{Limited Government} \\ & \times \text{Race}) + b_{15} (\text{In-group Identification} \times \text{Race}) \\ & + b_{16} (\text{Out-group Resentment} \times \text{Race}) \\ & + b_{17} (\text{Race of Interviewer} \times \text{Race}) + u \end{aligned}$$

We include interaction terms between each independent variable and race, on the idea that each might influence black and white opinion differently. One expression of racial differences in politics may be that black and white Americans follow distinctive paths to their views, and our analysis takes this into account.

The estimated parameters from this series of equations are interesting in their own right, and they are presented in full in the appendix.¹³ They reveal, for example,

¹²We toyed with an alternative version of the raw racial divide, one that controls on a large set of social background variables: age, gender, marital status, union membership, region, religiosity, religion, and Hispanic ethnicity. Taking these various considerations into account might have affected the estimate of the racial divide in opinion, but it did not: the estimate of the racial divide in opinion from this more extensive analysis is in all important respects unchanged from the racial divide in raw form (these results are available on request).

¹³In some important respects our analysis resembles those reported by Bobo and Kluegel (1993). They are concerned primarily with white opinion, but towards the end of their article, they turn to racial differences over policy and whether such differences in opinion can be accounted for by differences between blacks and whites in social background and political attitudes. It is this part of their analysis that bears a resemblance to those we will carry out and report on here. But there are several important differences as

how important in-group identification is to opinion and whether the relationship between in-group identification and opinion is the same for white Americans as it is for black Americans. Our primary interest in these parameters is instrumental, however. We will use them to simulate what would happen to the racial divide under various hypothetical but imaginable circumstances. For instance, suppose that class differences between whites and blacks were erased, what would happen to the racial divide in opinion? Or again, what if blacks and whites no longer disagreed about the desirability of equal opportunity, how much would the racial divide in opinion shrink? It is through generating precise answers to hypothetical questions of this sort that we intend to illuminate the meaning of the racial divide.¹⁴

The Racial Divide over Issues of Race

We begin our exploration of the racial divide where it is most imposing to begin with, on matters dealing explicitly with race. Estimates of the raw divide on these issues are displayed in the first row of Table 3, one for each policy. On whether the government should ensure equal employment opportunity, for example, the raw divide is 0.362. This means that the average African American falls 0.362 further toward the liberal end of the policy dimension than the average white—a very large difference given that the entire scale runs from zero to one.

To what extent is this racial divide attributable to class differences? To answer this question we used the regression estimates to predict opinion for blacks and whites, *under the condition that racial differences on class have disappeared*. More precisely, our calculations presume that African Americans receive as much schooling, earn as much income, and command as much wealth as the average white American.¹⁵

Under this circumstance, would the racial divide contract? It would not. The results, shown in the second row of Table 3, indicate that the racial divide in opinion

well. Most important, Bobo and Kluegel control statistically on differences in social and political characteristics in order to treat what remains of the racial divide as evidence for group interest. In contrast, our object is to distinguish among alternative interpretations of the racial divide and then estimate how important each is in accounting for it.

¹⁴These simulations are unrealistic in that they envision large changes in material conditions and attitudes and they ignore how changes in one might affect others. We think of them as heuristic exercises to help us unravel how race is entwined with opinion.

¹⁵In this and subsequent simulations, all the other variables are entered at their mean population values, separately of course for blacks and whites. This allows us to compare the simulated and raw divides directly.

TABLE 3 Reducing the Racial Divide I: Differences between Blacks and Whites in Opinion on Race Policy Under Various Hypothetical Conditions

	Equal Employ. Opportunity	School Integration	Spending for Blacks	Programs to Help Blacks	Preferential Hiring	College Quotas
Raw Divide	0.362	0.355	0.388	0.183	0.430	0.519
Divide after simulating change in:						
Social Class	0.340	0.340	0.385	0.165	0.361	0.497
Principles	0.229	0.233	0.314	0.125	0.377	0.400
In-Group Identification	0.353	0.366	0.356	0.151	0.324	0.465
Out-Group Resentment	0.336	0.349	0.336	0.130	0.341	0.456
Audience	0.309	0.342	0.291	0.154	0.335	0.502
Net Divide	0.118	0.208	0.130	-0.007	0.018	0.246

Source: 1992 National Election Studies. Simulations calculated using overall sample average values for independent variables and coefficients from the appendix. Class Simulation calculated by setting black respondents to the white average level for education, income, and home ownership. Principles simulation calculated by setting all respondents to the midpoint between the black and white average levels for equality and limited government. In-Group simulation calculated by setting black respondents to the white average level for in-group closeness. Out-Group simulation calculated by setting each racial group's thermometer evaluation of the other to the average thermometer evaluation of their own group. Audience simulation calculated by setting the probability of a black interviewer to .50 for all respondents. Net Divide is the racial divide in opinion after all simulations are conducted simultaneously.

on issues of race would be largely unaffected by the huge transformations in American society that our simulation imagines. If blacks were the equal of whites in education, income, and wealth, almost no change would be detected in the racial divide.

This result holds up across a variety of alternative specifications and measures. In calculating the simulation summarized in Table 3, we chose to set blacks to the white averages for class because the recent historical trend has been toward increased class status for African Americans. However, we find virtually the same results applying different criteria for the simulation: when we set class for whites and blacks to the mid-point between their sample values or when we set whites' class location to that of blacks. Nor do the results change when we used other measures of class. We reran our models using a measure of subjective class identification, and then again using a set of occupational category codes (Manza, Hout, and Brooks 1995), with the same results. We also estimated a model with class alone—dropping principles, identity, and audience—in order to assess the total effects that could be attributable to class, including any indirect effects that act through the other variables. Here again the story is the same: class differences have a trivial effect on the racial divide. (All of these results are available on request.)

Two reasons stand out for this failure. First, among whites, class is related to opinion in complex ways. More

education leads to more liberal views, on average, while more income and wealth leads, on average, to more conservative views (these results are shown in the appendix). Thus if whites became more like blacks on measures of class, they would be pushed in a liberal direction by their falling incomes and more modest wealth, but pushed in a conservative direction by their diminished schooling. Second, among African Americans, class predicts opinion on racial issues poorly. The only clear result among blacks is that income is associated with conservative opinions on affirmative action. These two patterns—offsetting effects of class among whites, weak effects among blacks—logically imply that the racial divide is not much affected by class differences.¹⁶

Having little success explaining the racial divide in class terms, we turned next to principles: specifically, to the ideas of equal opportunity and limited government. Here we make some headway. Because these two prin-

¹⁶ Social class makes a visible dent in the racial divide on one issue only: employment affirmative action. On this issue, among whites, education is uncorrelated with opinion, so class no longer pushes whites in opposite, offsetting directions. Among blacks, income has the largest effect on affirmative action in employment of any policy. Together, this provides a visible class-based reduction in the racial divide on affirmative action on hiring. This result does *not* replicate in our analysis of the 1988 NES, so perhaps little should be made of it. In any case, the general story here is the irrelevance of social class to the racial divide.

ciples predict opinion powerfully, for blacks and whites alike (as the regression results presented in the appendix reveal), and because blacks and whites differ substantially on the desirability of equal opportunity and on the proper role of government (as we saw in Table 2), principles turn out to account for a sizable share of the racial divide in opinion.

Precisely how much is given in the third row of Table 3, which presents the results of a simulation in which blacks and whites are presumed to take the same position on equal opportunity and limited government.¹⁷ Under these conditions, as Table 3 indicates, the racial divide is substantially reduced: on average, across the six issues, by about one-quarter. Principles appear to be especially important for the racial divide on fair employment and school desegregation, perhaps because these two policies invoke principles of equality and limited government so emphatically. Both are plainly about the realization of equality of opportunity and both frame the policy question in terms of whether or not racial equality falls within the proper scope of the federal government.

This brings us next to social identity. In our analysis, social identity has two faces—both identification with the in-group and sentiment toward the out-group—and of course we measure the two concepts separately for whites and blacks. With respect to the first, African Americans are much more likely to identify with their racial group than whites are (as we learned in Table 2), but suppose now that this difference disappeared. Table 3 presents the results of simulating a society in which blacks are no more likely to identify with their racial group than whites are with theirs. What consequence would this have for the racial divide in opinion?

The answer is rather little. In-group identification is generally a weak predictor of opinion. Whites who identify with their racial group tend to be a bit more conservative on issues of race, and blacks who identify with their racial group tend to be a bit more liberal on issues of race, but these effects tend to be small, and so don't add up to much by way of accounting for the racial divide in opinion. Except, we should hasten to add, in the case of affirmative action. On establishing quotas in college admissions and especially on racial preferences in hiring, racial group identification suddenly steps up into a significant role. Affirmative action is perhaps the most

contentious site for political conflict on race today, and, as Table 3 shows, it is on issues of affirmative action where racial group solidarity leaves its mark.¹⁸

Social identity's second face is sentiment toward the out-group: white Americans' evaluations of blacks and black Americans' evaluations of whites. The former tends to be given more attention in the scholarly literature, but we find that both play a role in the racial divide. Whites who express hostility toward blacks (as assessed through thermometer score ratings) are inclined to oppose all the various racial policy initiatives: prohibiting discrimination on the job, federal assistance to blacks, quotas in college admissions, and so on.¹⁹ Meanwhile, blacks who return the favor by expressing hostility toward whites (again, as assessed through thermometer score ratings) are inclined to support the same policies, though this effect is clear only in the case of affirmative action.

What is the implication of these results for the racial divide in opinion? Imagine an America in which whites feel about blacks no differently than they feel about their own racial group, and black Americans do the same, evaluating blacks and whites interchangeably.²⁰ Then, as Table 3 shows, the racial divide would close, with the reduction being most notable on affirmative action. On racial preferences in hiring, for instance, if neither in-group identification nor out-group sentiment bore any mark of a color-conscious society, the racial divide in opinion would be cut nearly in half.

Bear in mind that these reductions in the racial divide are accomplished with the rather thin thermometer-score measures of group identity. Replacing whites' evaluations of blacks via thermometer-score ratings with their scores on the racial resentment scale produced still stronger results. Racial resentment turns out to be a very potent predictor of whites' opinions on matters of race—indeed, the most potent predictor of all that we examined (see appendix). Simulating a society in which whites are less racially resentful produces sharp reductions in the racial divide. Altering *only* whites' attitudes toward

¹⁷In this case, we set the views of black and whites to the mid-point between their actual sample averages. Thus, this simulation envisions the views of both blacks and of whites changing. Alternative versions of these simulations yield virtually the same results.

¹⁸Note that if whites' in-group identification strengthened, to match that of blacks, the racial divide would increase, because the increased identification would lead whites, on average, to be more conservative on racial issues.

¹⁹The only exception, shown in the appendix, is school integration, but we don't take this case too seriously, because when we replace the thermometer score ratings with the racial resentment scale, strong effects appear.

²⁰In other words, we set blacks' thermometer rating of whites to their average evaluation of blacks; and whites' thermometer rating of blacks to their average rating of whites.

blacks and blacks' attitudes toward whites, the racial divide is reduced on average by nearly 40 percent.²¹

This leaves finally the question of audience. Consistent with previous research, we find that whites express more liberal opinions on race when they are talking to African Americans, just as African Americans express more conservative opinions on race when they are speaking to whites. As shown in the appendix, the race of interviewer effect is consistent and sizable for white respondents, smaller and more variable for black respondents.

Calculating the implications of these effects for the racial divide is tricky, because no natural baseline exists. For our other independent variables the sample averages reflect population values. The proportion of respondents assigned a black or white interviewer, on the other hand, bears no necessary relationship to the racial composition of social interactions respondents would have in their daily lives. We proceed as follows. We assume that if people did not notice the race of their conversation partner, they would express opinions at the midpoint between the (distorted) opinion they currently express to a white interviewer and the (equally distorted) opinion they express to a black interviewer. We simulate this world by setting the proportion of black interviewers to one half, for all respondents. As the bottom row of Table 3 shows, the racial divide in opinion under these circumstances would be somewhat smaller than the raw divide generated by NES, by 0.051, or 13.7 percent.²²

The Racial Divide over Social Welfare Policy

So much for the racial divide on issues of race. Next we try our hand at explaining the racial divide in the realm of social welfare policy. Although the racial divide is less imposing here than in the realm of race, blacks and whites differ substantially over federal aid to education, the obligation of the government in Washington to guarantee

Americans an adequate standard of living, and more. These differences are summarized in the first row of Table 4. As revealed there, the raw racial divide on social welfare policy ranges from 0.075 to 0.225, averaging 0.147. We will follow the same analytic path for these issues that we carved out above, watching as we go to see if the scenery is similar here, among social welfare policies that are not constructed or framed in explicitly racial terms.

It turns out that the scenery changes immediately. For one thing, social class is now part of the story. As the first row of Table 4 discloses, erasing class differences between blacks and whites would lead to significant reductions in the racial divide on three issues in particular: federal assistance to the unemployed, government health insurance, and the federal government's responsibility to provide jobs and an adequate standard of living. Averaging across all eight issues in the social welfare domain, the elimination of social class differences between blacks and whites would reduce the racial divide in opinion by about 10 percent.

The greater prominence of social class here compared to the realm of racial policy is due primarily to two factors. One is that among white Americans, education is associated with conservative opinions on social welfare issues, a reversal of the finding in the domain of race. This means that whites are no longer pushed in opposite directions by different aspects of their class position. Two, among African Americans, social class is now a consistent predictor of opinion. For blacks (as for whites), more education and more income are associated with more conservative views.²³ Thus if blacks were to become the equal of whites in education and income, as our simulation imagines, their views on social welfare would become more conservative and the racial divide would close.

More dramatic alterations in the racial divide are implied by the elimination of differences between blacks and whites over principles. Table 4 presents the results of a simulation which supposes that blacks and whites no longer disagree about equal opportunity or limited government.²⁴ Under these conditions, the racial divide in opinion on social welfare would be substantially reduced. Across the eight policies, equal opportunity and limited government account for nearly one half of the racial divide.

With relatively little divide left to account for at this point, we turn next to social identity. Here the results are easy to summarize: in-group racial identification and

²¹38.5 percent to be exact. In this simulation, whites' score on the racial-resentment scale is replaced by blacks' average score, on the same scale, while blacks' thermometer-score rating of whites is replaced by their rating of blacks.

²²Most respondents are currently interviewed by whites, so in this simulation, whites and blacks both become more liberal as the proportion of interviewers moves to 50–50. However, because race of interviewer is more strongly associated with opinion for whites than blacks, the net result is to close the divide somewhat. Clearly, there are many ways to simulate different racial contexts and their effects on opinion. Another approach would be to compare a strictly segregated world (whites talk only to whites and blacks only to blacks) with a perfectly integrated world in which people choose conversation partners at random (whites and blacks talk to each other commensurate with their fraction of the population). The effect of moving from the first to the second world would be to reduce the divide substantially (by 0.092, on average).

²³As always, see the appendix for the details of the regression results.

²⁴Again, the views of blacks and whites are set to the mid-point between their sample averages.

TABLE 4 Reducing the Racial Divide II: Differences between Blacks and Whites in Opinion on Social Welfare Policy Under Various Hypothetical Conditions

	Spending versus Services	Spending on Education	Spending on the Poor	Spending on Financial Aid	Spending on the Unemployed	Spending on the Homeless	Government Health Insurance	Government Job Guarantee
Raw Divide	0.166	0.121	0.162	0.128	0.225	0.102	0.075	0.193
Divide after simulating change in:								
Social Class	0.156	0.119	0.148	0.147	0.184	0.104	0.040	0.148
Principles	0.097	0.050	0.083	0.053	0.148	0.040	-0.003	0.121
In-Group Identification	0.133	0.152	0.169	0.146	0.232	0.103	0.063	0.194
Out-Group Resentment	0.134	0.115	0.129	0.104	0.197	0.095	0.064	0.198
Audience	0.143	0.111	0.117	0.102	0.147	0.076	0.044	0.221
Net Divide	-0.001	0.063	-0.002	0.041	0.009	0.012	-0.093	0.107

Source: 1992 National Election Studies. Simulations calculated using overall sample average values for independent variables and coefficients from the appendix. Class Simulation calculated by setting black respondents to the white average level for education, income, and home ownership. Principles simulation calculated by setting all respondents to the midpoint between the black and white average levels for equality and limited government. In-Group simulation calculated by setting black respondents to the white average level for in-group closeness. Out-Group simulation calculated by setting each racial group's thermometer evaluation of the other to the average thermometer evaluation of their own group. Audience simulation calculated by setting the probability of a black interviewer to .50 for all respondents. Net Divide is the racial divide in opinion after all simulations are conducted simultaneously.

out-group racial hostility have virtually nothing to do with explaining the racial divide. In sharp contrast to issues of race, whether or not blacks are closely identified with their racial group reveals nothing about their views on social welfare programs. Likewise, in contrast to the case of race, whether or not whites and blacks express hostility toward each other tells us nothing about what their opinions might be on assistance to the homeless or government health insurance. Table 4 records the logical implication of these nonfindings: namely, that in a color-blind society, one in which blacks would be no more likely to identify with their racial group than whites are with theirs, and where whites feel about blacks no differently than they feel about their own racial group, and black Americans do the same, evaluating blacks and whites interchangeably, the racial divide would be essentially unchanged. When it comes to opinion on social welfare policies, racial identity appears to be irrelevant.²⁵

Finally, as in the case of racial policy, we find that black and white Americans express somewhat different views on social welfare depending on audience, though here the effects are a bit smaller (the coefficients are shown in the appendix). We calculate the implications

of these effects as before. And as before, in a world where people do not notice the race of their interviewer, the racial divide would be reduced by about 0.026 (18.1 percent).²⁶

Summary and Implications

Race, it could be said, is mere convention: racial categories are social constructs, not biological ones. To this we would add only that race is a *stubborn* convention: written into law, entrenched in social experience, and entangled in deep and complicated ways in politics. We undertook our analysis with racial categories as they are commonly understood not in order to reify them, but to investigate the way they structure public opinion. Hoping to clarify the meaning of the racial divide in contemporary public opinion, we have discovered that there are in fact *two* divides: one over racial inequality, the other over the welfare state.

On racial policies the differences between whites and blacks are huge. Our analysis suggests that this racial divide cannot be explained in any simple or straightforward

²⁵ This conclusion holds not just for the thin measure of out-group hostility (thermometer-score ratings) but for the more elaborate one as well (the racial resentment scale).

²⁶ Following the simulation described in footnote 22 gives a larger audience effect, averaging 0.054.

way by class. That whites command more material resources than blacks is an undeniable and important feature of American society—but not for understanding the racial divide over matters of race. Instead, the racial divide over such policies as school integration or affirmative action is primarily a story of political principles and social identity. Blacks prize equal opportunity, whites worry about big government, blacks express solidarity with their racial group, racial resentments are common among whites: these are the primary elements of the racial divide on matters of race. Our analysis implies that if differences of principle and identity could be eliminated, the racial divide would drastically diminish. If on top of this we somehow impose an integrated society, then both blacks and whites would moderate their opinions, and the divide would vanish altogether.

The story plays out quite differently for social welfare policy. First of all, the raw racial differences here, though sizable, are not nearly as imposing as on matters of race. Moreover, social identity in any of its several manifestations is quite irrelevant to this racial divide. Instead, differences between whites and blacks on social welfare programs are due, in small part, to social class and to audience, and in large part, to principle. Indeed, it could be said that differences between blacks and whites on the American social welfare state by and large reflect philosophical disagreements. What is the meaning and importance of equality? What role should the federal government play in social and economic affairs? Blacks and whites answer these questions differently (on average), and as a consequence, end up with different opinions on health insurance, unemployment benefits, federal support for public education, and all the rest.²⁷

A final empirical point worth underlining is that blacks and whites differ not only in their opinions but also, in some modest measure, in *how they come to their opinions*. In general, racial group solidarity is more powerful among blacks; social class is more powerful among whites; audience seems to be less important to blacks than to whites (who generally have fewer inter-racial experi-

ences); the idea of limited government appears to be more crystallized and potent for whites than for blacks; and out-group resentment figures more prominently in the opinions expressed by white Americans. The differences here are not dramatic—differences of degree not of kind—and we should not exaggerate them. Still, one feature of racial difference in politics is that blacks and whites make their opinions somewhat differently: they follow somewhat different recipes, mixing together combinations of ingredients in somewhat different proportions.

The Racial Divide and Racial Group Interest

We began by noting that efforts to explain the racial divide are rare, recognizing Jackman's analysis of social inequality (Jackman 1994) as an exception. Now that our results have been presented, we consider them in relation to her alternative analysis. Jackman argues that racial differences over policy matters involving race are a direct and immediate reflection of differences in group interest, a concept that does not enter our analysis directly. Jackman acknowledges that group interest is constrained by practical considerations and encumbered by ethical considerations, but in the end of her analysis, the racial divide comes down to group interest.

Jackman gets analytic leverage by comparing racial differences in opinion with the corresponding differences that arise from cleavages of class and gender. We get ours by comparing individual blacks and whites who differ in their resources and outlooks. Because we come at the racial divide from different levels of analysis, our results and interpretations are not directly comparable. We believe, nevertheless, that our analysis provides a view of the racial divide and its relationship to group interest that complements hers.

Although we find political principles and social identity "account for" much of the racial divide, this does not imply the irrelevance of racial group interest. We think, to the contrary, that racial group interest is insinuated into both the political principles that blacks and whites endorse and the group attachments and resentments that they feel. Principles are often used in politics to defend and advance interests; group sentiments are a product, in part, of conflict over resources.

Our analysis shows, in part, how group interests come to be understood by individual citizens in the first place—citizens who, after all, have roles and identities in addition to those defined by their racial group. An analysis that focuses only on group interest has nothing to say about individual differences in experience and outlook: blacks are blacks and whites are whites, and opinions reflect only this one fact alone. Jackman's group analysis

²⁷ We suggested earlier that our results on principles could be interpreted as speaking to the ideological foundations of opinion. To test this claim, we repeated our analysis, first dropping in a direct measure of ideological identification (based on variables 923509 and 923512). Among whites, the effects of ideological identification were inconsistent and small in the domain of race, and consistent and appreciable in the domain of social welfare. Among blacks, the effects were negligible throughout. Thus, overall, including a measure of ideological identification would only sharpen the differences we already see between domains: that principled (or ideological) differences between blacks and whites are important in accounting for the racial divide on social welfare but quite unimportant in accounting for the racial divide on race. Complete results available on request.

usefully underscores the point that opinions on national policy are rooted in part in ongoing relations of racial inequality, while our individual analysis complements hers by rooting racial differences in individual variation.

Prospects for Change

What does the future hold for the racial divide? In this final section, informed by our analysis and results, we offer a few speculations on the probable future course of the racial divide in opinion.

As we have seen, differences between black and white Americans on matters of national policy are responsive to material conditions of two kinds: economic resources and interracial experiences. The first, summarized in our analysis under the category of social class, is relevant primarily to the racial divide over social welfare programs. Black Americans are more likely to support government health insurance and other such programs than white Americans are, at least partly for reasons of class. This suggests that future alterations in the racial divide in this realm depend in part on change in the relative class position of blacks and whites—and it is very hard to say what is likely to happen here. On the one hand, over the past fifty years, black Americans have made significant inroads into the middle class, sharing to some degree in the economic prosperity and educational opportunities that came to all of American society. On the other hand, these real gains have slowed in recent decades; imposing racial differences in employment, income, and especially wealth remain; and in American society generally, economic inequality is growing (Danziger and Gottschalk 1993, 1995; Farley 1996; Farley and Allen 1987; Jaynes and Williams 1989). If racial differences in command over economic resources diminish, then (all other things equal), we should expect a corresponding decline in the racial divide on social welfare policy.

More important to the racial divide than class, according to our analysis, is audience. On issues of race and on issues of social welfare, for blacks and whites alike, speaking to a member of the opposite race resulted in more moderate opinions and therefore a smaller racial divide. Thus if American society were to move in the direction of greater racial integration, then the racial divide should contract. We do expect this to happen, though not quickly. The legal foundations for segregation are of course gone now, but the persistence of racial segregation in the United States is quite remarkable (Farley and Allen 1987; Farley and Frey 1992; Lieberman and Waters 1988; Massey and Denton 1993). All things equal, segregation is likely to remain for some time a powerful force for the preservation of the racial divide.

Things are rarely equal, of course, and perhaps the most unpredictable element to take into account in predicting the future of the racial divide concerns principles. The racial divide is, as we've seen, partly a philosophical disagreement between African Americans and white Americans over the importance of equality and the proper scope of government. Thus the future of the racial divide could be said to turn substantially on the extent to which blacks and whites continue to disagree on these matters of principle. While it would be foolish to think of these disagreements over principle as permanent, it seems equally unwise to expect them to undergo rapid or dramatic change. We suspect that blacks and whites understand principles of equal opportunity and limited government at least in part based on their own group's current position and historical experience. Thus for blacks and whites to settle their philosophical differences would require both a transformation in the structure of American society and a denial of history, and so we do not look for this soon.

A more likely prospect here has to do with the *connections* citizens see between their principles, on the one side, and their views on policy, on the other. The importance of principles like equal opportunity and limited government to public opinion is not fixed but variable, contingent on how policies are formulated and framed (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Nelson and Kinder 1996). Elites put together policies and frame them in particular ways, thereby suggesting to ordinary citizens how complicated issues should be understood and which principles, if any, should come into play. For example, government health insurance might be framed by its opponents as an unwelcome, expensive, and unworkable intrusion of the federal government; it might be framed by its supporters as society's obligation to equalizing opportunity. Issues are always complex; they can always be framed in more than one way; and certain frames encourage citizens to construct their opinions in particular ways. All this is to say that the racial divide from one issue to the next and on into the future depends in part on politics.

Much the same can be said for the racial divide and social identity. According to our results, in-group solidarity pushes black Americans to the left on matters of race policy while out-group resentment pushes whites Americans to the right. In an America where blacks would be no more likely to identify with their racial group than whites and whites, in turn, would feel no differently toward black Americans than they do toward their own racial group, the racial divide would noticeably shrink. But it is hard to imagine our current color-conscious society so transformed.

Easier to envision are changes in the potency of social identity induced by alterations in elite discourse. Issues can be formulated and framed in such a way as to light up or downplay racial identity, and therefore, in such a way as to expand or contract the racial divide in opinion. When poverty policies are targeted on the poor and the disadvantaged regardless of race, for example, the racial divide has been shown to contract quite spectacularly (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Kinder and Sanders 1996). Under these circumstances, whites are still more likely than blacks to favor conservative solutions, but the differences are much diminished and quite modest, nothing like what happens when policies are formulated in explicitly racial terms. Thus we say again: the future of the racial divide in opinion hinges on politics, on choices made by elites.

Finally, having documented the shape and clarified the meaning of the racial divide, should we want racial differences in opinion to disappear? No, not entirely. The racial divide stems partly from in-group identification among African Americans, and in-group identification is

an important political resource, particularly for materially disadvantaged groups. The racial divide stems partly from principled disagreements, which are themselves likely rooted in the actual history of group experience. The divide stems partly from material inequalities, and so to wish away the racial divide without fixing those real inequalities would be to hope for something akin to false consciousness. The size and apparent persistence of the racial divide is nevertheless troubling. For the racial divide is also a sign of how segregated our society remains and how ridden it is still with anti-democratic and intolerant sentiments. The pluralists were probably right to say that politics works more smoothly and peacefully when citizens are separated from one another not by one overriding difference but by many different and crosscutting differences. They were wrong not to recognize how overriding a difference race can be.

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Appendix

Predicting Black and White Opinion on Race Issues

	Equal Employment Opportunity		School Integration		Spending for Blacks		Programs to Help Blacks		Preferential Hiring		College Quotas	
	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks
Education	0.211** (0.055)	-0.060 (0.146)	0.087 (0.055)	-0.029 (0.155)	0.070* (0.033)	0.021 (0.093)	0.147** (0.029)	0.022 (0.084)	0.036 (0.039)	-0.317** (0.114)	-0.021 (0.046)	-0.098 (0.134)
Income	-0.075 (0.073)	-0.135 (0.161)	-0.176* (0.071)	0.060 (0.181)	-0.063 (0.044)	-0.019 (0.105)	-0.105** (0.039)	-0.199* (0.095)	-0.148** (0.052)	-0.225^ (0.126)	-0.141* (0.059)	-0.261^ (0.149)
Home Ownership	-0.042 (0.032)	0.000 (0.072)	-0.011 (0.032)	-0.086 (0.077)	-0.038* (0.019)	-0.012 (0.046)	-0.027 (0.017)	0.020 (0.041)	-0.033 (0.022)	-0.051 (0.056)	-0.046^ (0.026)	0.084 (0.065)
Equality	0.682** (0.072)	0.515* (0.216)	0.602** (0.072)	0.343 (0.227)	0.443** (0.045)	0.258^ (0.136)	0.401** (0.039)	0.385** (0.120)	0.282** (0.053)	0.144 (0.164)	0.435** (0.061)	0.733** (0.192)
Limited Government	-0.152** (0.038)	-0.176 (0.160)	-0.223** (0.038)	-0.186 (0.161)	-0.108** (0.023)	-0.048 (0.096)	-0.051* (0.020)	0.085 (0.086)	-0.041 (0.027)	-0.125 (0.116)	-0.111** (0.032)	-0.112 (0.136)
In-Group Closeness	-0.018 (0.047)	0.026 (0.101)	-0.134** (0.047)	-0.029 (0.104)	-0.095** (0.028)	0.089 (0.063)	-0.067** (0.025)	0.089 (0.055)	-0.077* (0.034)	0.293** (0.076)	-0.064^ (0.039)	0.148^ (0.089)
Out-Group Resentment	-0.253** (0.061)	-0.015 (0.127)	-0.041 (0.059)	0.005 (0.137)	-0.193** (0.035)	0.121 (0.080)	-0.173** (0.032)	0.134^ (0.070)	-0.112** (0.042)	0.315** (0.098)	-0.199** (0.049)	0.161 (0.112)
Black Interviewer	0.134 (0.127)	0.034 (0.097)	0.155 (0.131)	0.175^ (0.093)	0.223** (0.067)	0.031 (0.056)	0.105^ (0.059)	0.065 (0.049)	0.286** (0.091)	0.125^ (0.071)	0.076 (0.105)	0.056 (0.083)
Intercept	0.211** (0.073)	0.570** (0.173)	0.275** (0.072)	0.562** (0.178)	0.342** (0.044)	0.554** (0.105)	0.230** (0.039)	0.213* (0.092)	0.147** (0.052)	0.448** (0.127)	0.255** (0.060)	0.209 (0.148)
n	1,205		1,205		1,620		1,531		1,637		1,607	
see	0.43		0.43		0.30		0.26		0.36		0.41	
R ²	0.23		0.21		0.28		0.21		0.21		0.23	

Source: 1992 American National Election Study. Each issue was run as a single regression, with interaction terms between each independent variable and race of respondent. Cell entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.

**p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ^p < 0.10

Appendix

Predicting Black and White Opinion on Social Welfare Issues

	Spending vs. Services		Spending on Education		Spending on the Poor		Spending on Financial Aid		Spending on the Unemployed		Spending on the Homeless		Government Health Insurance		Government Job Guarantee	
	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks	Whites	Blacks
Education	-0.041 (0.026)	-0.220** (0.079)	-0.059* (0.029)	0.042 (0.083)	-0.209** (0.031)	0.085 (0.087)	0.051 (0.033)	0.142 (0.094)	-0.125** (0.033)	-0.185* (0.094)	-0.071* (0.030)	0.132 (0.083)	-0.020 (0.034)	-0.100 (0.096)	0.003 (0.030)	-0.165^ (0.088)
Income	-0.119** (0.035)	0.079 (0.090)	0.016 (0.038)	-0.014 (0.094)	-0.093* (0.040)	-0.120 (0.098)	-0.014 (0.043)	0.137 (0.106)	-0.203** (0.043)	-0.134 (0.106)	-0.012 (0.039)	-0.069 (0.094)	-0.180** (0.044)	-0.053 (0.113)	-0.151** (0.040)	-0.237* (0.102)
Home Ownership	0.012 (0.015)	0.004 (0.039)	-0.023 (0.017)	-0.019 (0.041)	0.009 (0.017)	-0.033 (0.042)	-0.020 (0.019)	-0.048 (0.046)	0.024 (0.019)	-0.031 (0.046)	-0.007 (0.017)	-0.006 (0.040)	0.013 (0.019)	-0.086^ (0.048)	-0.021 (0.017)	-0.005 (0.043)
Equality	0.210** (0.034)	0.164 (0.117)	0.239** (0.039)	0.291* (0.121)	0.383** (0.041)	0.254* (0.126)	0.191** (0.045)	0.051 (0.137)	0.242** (0.044)	0.441** (0.137)	0.317** (0.039)	0.141 (0.121)	0.304** (0.045)	0.477** (0.140)	0.247** (0.040)	0.428** (0.127)
Limited Government	-0.231** (0.018)	-0.105 (0.092)	-0.161** (0.020)	-0.083 (0.086)	-0.172** (0.021)	-0.070 (0.089)	-0.156** (0.023)	-0.319** (0.097)	-0.159** (0.023)	-0.038 (0.097)	-0.193** (0.020)	-0.023 (0.085)	-0.149** (0.024)	0.008 (0.107)	-0.190** (0.021)	0.024 (0.089)
In-Group Closeness	0.003 (0.022)	0.092^ (0.053)	0.039 (0.025)	-0.086 (0.056)	-0.021 (0.026)	-0.019 (0.059)	0.059* (0.028)	-0.050 (0.063)	-0.027 (0.028)	-0.020 (0.063)	-0.013 (0.025)	-0.004 (0.056)	-0.017 (0.029)	0.034 (0.067)	0.004 (0.026)	-0.001 (0.060)
Out-Group Resentment	-0.019 (0.029)	0.122^ (0.070)	0.041 (0.031)	0.045 (0.071)	-0.057^ (0.033)	0.109 (0.074)	-0.008 (0.036)	0.093 (0.080)	-0.038 (0.035)	0.096 (0.081)	-0.004 (0.031)	0.024 (0.071)	0.026 (0.037)	0.058 (0.085)	-0.006 (0.033)	-0.022 (0.078)
Black Interviewer	0.088^ (0.051)	0.057 (0.048)	0.031 (0.060)	0.014 (0.051)	0.125* (0.062)	0.046 (0.052)	0.109 (0.068)	0.081 (0.058)	0.202** (0.067)	0.057 (0.057)	0.056 (0.059)	0.004 (0.050)	0.106 (0.066)	0.059 (0.058)	-0.010 (0.059)	0.067 (0.054)
Intercept	0.548** (0.035)	0.486** (0.089)	0.711** (0.038)	0.731** (0.093)	0.720** (0.040)	0.701** (0.097)	0.671** (0.044)	0.758** (0.106)	0.702** (0.043)	0.614** (0.105)	0.749** (0.038)	0.800** (0.093)	0.564** (0.045)	0.345** (0.109)	0.454** (0.040)	0.468** (0.096)
n	1,415		1,665		1,650		1,648		1,666		1,637		1,482		1,500	
see	0.22		0.27		0.28		0.31		0.30		0.27		0.30		0.27	
R ²	0.25		0.12		0.21		0.09		0.18		0.15		0.13		0.19	

Source: 1992 American National Election Study. Each issue was run as a single regression, with interaction terms between each independent variable and race of respondent. Cell entries are unstandardized OLS coefficients, with standard errors in parentheses.
 **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; ^p < 0.10

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