

The background of the cover features several stylized, light green leaf motifs scattered across a pale yellow-green gradient. These motifs are simple line drawings of leaves on short stems, appearing in various orientations.

RACIAL ATTITUDES IN THE 1990s

Continuity and Change

Steven A. Tuch, Jack K. Martin

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Edited by
Steven A. Tuch
Jack K. Martin

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In fond memory of

A. Wade Smith

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Introduction

Jack K. Martin, E. M. Beck, and
Steven A. Tuch

This volume had its beginning in a two-day conference on "Racial Attitudes in the 1990s" held at the University of Georgia in the winter of 1993. Sponsored by the University's Survey Research Center and the Institute for Behavioral Research, the conference brought together several leading researchers in the study of race and racial attitudes in the United States. Featured speakers at this conference were A. Wade Smith (late) of Arizona State University and Lawrence Bobo of Harvard University. Additional commentary was provided by E. M. Beck of the University of Georgia, Steven A. Tuch of The George Washington University, and Jack K. Martin of the University of Georgia.

The featured papers at the conference form the core of this original collection of chapters on racial attitudes. The only exception is the final chapter by Tuch, Sigelman, and Martin, which is reprinted from *Challenge*. The timeliness of such a collection finds emphasis in the fact that the January 1993 conference roughly corresponded with the fiftieth anniversary of Gunnar Myrdal's (1944) disturbing portrait of black-white relationships in post-World War II U.S. society, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, and by the fact that the conference followed closely on the heels of the civil unrest and racial tension generated by the Rodney King verdict in Los Angeles. Thus 1993 was a particularly opportune time to turn our attention to the issue of racial attitudes, and events since that time have done little to change this. Commentary and debate surrounding the state of race relations in the wake of the O. J. Simpson trial and the recent wave of racially motivated arson aimed at

African-American churches in the South reemphasize the need for continued scholarly attention to issues of contemporary U.S. race relations and racism.

The chapters that follow are organized around three broad themes: aggregate levels of white support for general principles of racial equality and of support for policies designed to realize the principles; sociodemographic distinctiveness in whites' racial attitudes; and the still under-researched question of African-American attitudes toward race and racism. Part I includes a prologue on the state of race attitudes theory and research adapted from A. Wade Smith's conference presentation and an overview of the transformation of Americans' attitudes regarding race is based on Lawrence Bobo's conference paper. Parts II, III, and IV are comprised of nine chapters solicited from leading researchers in the area.

Chapters 1 and 2 constitute Part I, "The Transformation of Racial Attitudes in the United States." Until his death in 1994, A. Wade Smith was one of the nation's leading researchers in the area of race relations. Wade's talk provided conference participants with a provocative assessment of the current state of theory and method in the area. As a tribute, inadequate as it is, to Wade and his numerous contributions to our understanding of racial attitudes and race relations, we are including his introductory remarks at the conference as Chapter 1 in this volume. Titled "Prologue: Reflections on Racial Attitude Research," these brief remarks constitute Wade's final writings.

As noted, more than 50 years have passed since the publication of Myrdal's landmark work, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. The ensuing years have witnessed a dramatic decline in overt expressions of antiblack and segregationist sentiments by white Americans. According to some commentators, however, this liberalizing trend may have moderated, or at least been transformed, in recent years. In Chapter 2, "Laissez-Faire Racism: The Crystallization of a Kinder, Gentler, Antiblack Ideology," Lawrence Bobo, James R. Kluegel, and Ryan A. Smith provide an overview of this transformation in the racial attitudes of white Americans.

The chapter by Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith argues that racial attitudes and beliefs are best understood within the overlapping contexts of the economics and politics of race in the United States. According to these authors, traditional, or Jim Crow, racism — which found its roots in the post-Civil War South and the Southern planter elite — disappeared from the scene as structural economic changes reduced the importance of traditional forms of agriculture to the economy. Thus, as traditional racist ideology lost its embeddedness in dominant economic and political institutions, its tenets came to be viewed as incompatible with U.S. values. These authors point to the progressive decline in white Americans'

support for conventional racist attitudes and beliefs as support for their contention.

According to Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith, however, racist ideology did not disappear; it only changed. These authors outline a new form of racial antipathy, *laissez-faire* racism, which has its roots in black Americans' relatively disadvantaged position in U.S. society. *Laissez-faire* racism is an ideology that attributes black disadvantages to supposed characteristics of blacks themselves, such as lack of attachment to the work ethic, and denies the potency of structural determinants of conditions in black communities.

As an outline for understanding the transformation of white Americans' racial attitudes, the notion of *laissez-faire* racism provides a powerful analytic framework. Evidence of widespread *laissez-faire* racist attitudes and beliefs suggests that large numbers of white Americans will accept as much race-based inequity as an ostensibly free market and egalitarian polity creates.

Part II of this volume, "The Racial Attitudes of Whites," comprises two chapters, each focusing on aggregate levels of whites' endorsement of principles supportive of racial equality.

In Chapter 3, "Symbolic Racism, Old-Fashioned Racism, and Whites' Opposition to Affirmative Action," Michael Hughes provides an empirical evaluation of the utility of the concept of symbolic racism. Using data from the 1986 and 1992 American National Election Studies, Hughes assesses the correlates of both symbolic racism and attitudes toward affirmative action among white Americans.

Like the arguments developed by Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith in Chapter 2, Hughes argues that symbolic racism, like *laissez-faire* racism, is clearly distinguishable from traditional racist beliefs. Interestingly, he finds no evidence that this configuration of attitudes is simply an outcome of the combination of support for individualism and antiblack affect. Instead, Hughes finds that both group self-interest and symbolic racism have significant independent influences on whites' support for affirmative action; in a simple additive effects model, traditional prejudice is not associated with greater opposition to affirmative action programs, while symbolic racism is; and in a nonadditive model, at high levels of old-fashioned prejudice, symbolic racism has little or no influence on affirmative action attitudes, whereas at the lowest levels of old-fashioned prejudice, symbolic racism has a substantial negative impact on attitudes supportive of affirmative action programs.

Hughes's findings raise several important questions regarding the nature, sources, and consequences of symbolic racism. Although symbolic racism presumably has nothing to do with interests, Hughes's analyses and interpretations suggest the possibility that symbolic racism itself may be a reflection of group interest. His analyses, which are consistent with

the idea that racial prejudice changes as the structural positions of various groups change, complement those of Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith and expand on H. Blumer's earlier argument that racial prejudice is a reflection of group position.

Aggregate levels of racial antipathy are also the focus of Chapter 4, "The Affective Component of Prejudice: Empirical Support for the New View," by Thomas F. Pettigrew. In this chapter Pettigrew contends that the tendency of theorists and researchers alike to focus almost exclusively on the cognitive components of prejudice (for example, stereotyping, causal misattributions, and so forth) results in the neglect of its affective component. Developing logic drawn from an emerging body of theory and research in the intergroup relations literature, Pettigrew presents evidence from two databases illustrating the situational and emotional specificity of prejudice and the importance of developing a group focus in prejudice research.

By explicitly incorporating the role of emotion in the study of prejudice, Pettigrew outlines a more comprehensive approach to the understanding of the sources of prejudice. As he points out, by emphasizing the way in which strong emotions act as a catalyst that magnifies intergroup processes, this more comprehensive model is capable of explaining both the positive and the negative extremes of intergroup relations.

Within the race attitudes literature there is a longstanding tradition of theory and research that addresses the determinants of whites' views of race and racial inequality. Many of these studies examine how one's position in the social structure, as defined by ascribed and achieved statuses, such as gender, age, schooling, wealth, and social class, condition the individual's perceptions of race and racism. The four chapters in Part III, "Sociodemographic Attributes and the Racial Attitudes of Whites," are located within this tradition, assessing whether distinctive racial attributions are associated with whites' sociodemographic characteristics.

In Chapter 5, "Status, Ideology, and Dimensions of Whites' Racial Beliefs and Attitudes: Progress and Stagnation," Lawrence Bobo and James R. Kluegel provide an empirical test of the *laissez-faire* racism thesis outlined in Chapter 2. Using data from the 1990 General Social Survey, Bobo and Kluegel examine four hypotheses relating whites' sociodemographic attributes and socioeconomic ideologies to measures of traditional and *laissez-faire* racism and attitudes toward racial policies.

Findings from their empirical tests provide support for each of their hypotheses. Sociodemographic characteristics, particularly age and schooling, are found to be predictive of traditional, or Jim Crow, racism. On the other hand, socioeconomic ideology — in the form of a denial of social responsibility for black disadvantage — is found to be an important correlate of contemporary stereotypes of blacks and perceptions of racial discrimination.

There are several important implications of these findings. First, the findings show clearly that support for traditional racist postures, especially among young and better educated whites, is low and declining. Unfortunately, this progress is offset by whites' general endorsement of newer, more subtle racist stereotypes that mitigate against the acknowledgment of societal responsibility for blacks' disadvantaged position.

Bobo and Kluegel's analyses demonstrate that although whites are now more in favor of egalitarian racial principles than they have been in the past, they continue to resist policies designed to ensure egalitarianism. According to the authors, this apparent paradox derives from the prevalent negative stereotypes of blacks as undeserving of any special treatment from government.

In Chapter 6, "Advance and Retreat: Racially Based Attitudes and Public Policy," Cedric Herring and Charles Amissah examine levels of social distance between white Americans and black Americans. In particular, these authors assess the social distance preferences of white ethnic groups in a variety of social contexts.

Using national survey data from the 1990 General Social Survey, Herring and Amissah compare ethnics and nonethnics with regard to their willingness to be integrated with blacks in neighborhoods, schools, marriage, and other contexts. Herring and Amissah's analyses show that despite the gains in racial integration observed over the past several decades, there is still substantial intolerance among nonblack Americans for African Americans, particularly among European whites and white nonethnics.

In discussing the implications of their research, the authors make a key observation: As long as large numbers of whites are unwilling to interact with blacks in these contexts, there will likely be continued difficulties in gaining widespread endorsement of social policies that require a pattern of routine social interaction among blacks and whites.

In Chapter 7, "White Ethnic Identification and Racial Attitudes," James E. Coverdill reports an innovative analysis of a question related to that of Herring and Amissah. Specifically, Coverdill derives and tests two hypotheses regarding the link between whites' ethnic identification and their racial attitudes. The first hypothesis suggests that white Americans' ethnic identification produces individualistic explanations for blacks' disadvantaged position in U.S. society; Coverdill's second hypothesis is that ethnics have a distaste for race-targeted policies designed to boost minority achievement.

Using data from the 1990 General Social Survey, Coverdill presents findings that are inconsistent with both of these hypotheses. His analyses demonstrate that ethnic identification has little effect on causal attributions of socioeconomic differences between blacks and whites and

that ethnics and nonethnics are indistinguishable in terms of their racial policy attitudes.

In Chapter 8, "Regional Differences in Whites' Racial Policy Attitudes," the editors examine an enduring finding in the race attitudes literature: that residents of Southern states report the highest levels of racial antipathy. In a test of a notion drawn from mass society theory that regional distinctiveness in racial attitudes has effectively disappeared, Tuch and Martin explore regional variations in whites' attitudes toward policies aimed at eliminating race-based disadvantages.

Utilizing data from two national and two regional surveys, Tuch and Martin disaggregate responses to an array of racial policy questions by non-South, South, and Deep South residence. They find that whites' views of policy initiatives designed to combat racial discrimination and ameliorate its effects are characterized by marked regional distinctiveness. On most policy issues, Southerners — and those raised in the Deep South, in particular — are much less likely than residents of other regions to endorse race-targeted policies.

Tuch and Martin interpret these findings as providing no evidence of the kind of regional convergence in racial affect predicted by mass society theory. In spite of substantial demographic and economic changes in Southern social structure over the last 50 years, Southerners — particularly those raised in the regional core — continue to be more resistant than non-Southerners to policies designed to change the racial status quo.

Compared to what is known about the attitudes of white Americans regarding issues of race, our knowledge of black Americans' racial attitudes is fragmentary at best. There are several reasons for this disparity in the literature. To begin, because blacks represent only about 12 percent of the U.S. population, in most national polls African Americans are not found in large enough numbers to sustain meaningful statistical analyses. More troubling, however, is the fact that, historically, African Americans have been treated as a monolithic group; that is, their racial attitudes have been assumed to be uniform, reflecting shared norms, values, and experiences. Beyond the obvious naiveté of such a view, the end result of having ignored intragroup variation in black Americans' attitudes about race is that little reliable data on demographic, socioeconomic, or regional differences in blacks' racial attitudes exist today. Moreover, lacking evidence of variation among African Americans, the tendency has been to assume that such differences do not exist. In this way, the untested assumption of a unity of opinion underestimates the variability of attitudes and beliefs among African Americans, ultimately leading to an overestimation of the contribution of race per se to black Americans' racial outlooks.

In an attempt to provide a partial remedy to this situation, Part IV, "The Racial Attitudes of African Americans," contains three chapters that focus explicitly on analyses of variation in the racial attitudes of black

Americans. In the first of these, "Blacks, Whites, and the Changing of the Guard in Black Political Leadership," Lee Sigelman explores public evaluations of four prominent black leaders: Jesse Jackson, Douglas Wilder, Colin Powell, and Louis Farrakhan.

Using survey data from a 1991 *Newsweek* poll conducted by the Gallup organization, Sigelman analyzes the transformation of black political leadership and African-American and white attitudes toward black leaders. Several interesting findings stand out. First, among both blacks and whites, Jackson was the most visible of the four leaders, Wilder the least visible; Powell was the only one of the group who was more visible among whites than among blacks; blacks were most favorably disposed toward the idea of Jackson assuming a more prominent national leadership role, followed by Powell and Wilder (only Farrakhan was negatively evaluated by blacks in this regard); and whites were most favorable toward Powell. Nevertheless, blacks were significantly more likely than whites to report that an increased leadership role for any one of the four African-American leaders would benefit black Americans. As Sigelman points out, this view likely reflects African Americans' symbolic affirmation of a strong desire for an increased presence of black decision-makers on the national political scene.

On the other hand, particularly with regard to the endorsement of the two more salient black leaders, Jackson and Powell, Sigelman's analyses indicate a clear differentiation within the black rank and file. For example, Jackson found his strongest support among younger blacks, those of lower educational attainment, blacks who identified themselves as Democrats, and those who blamed black poverty on society rather than on poor blacks themselves. Among whites, however, the only predictor of support for Jackson was societal rather than individual attributions of the causes of black poverty. A different pattern emerged with respect to evaluations of Colin Powell. Among blacks who expressed an opinion about Powell, those who attributed black disadvantage to blacks themselves were more likely to endorse Powell's leadership role.

Thus, Sigelman's analyses, like others in this volume, cast further doubt on the notion of a monolith of attitudes and beliefs among black Americans. At least as far as support for increased leadership roles for black leaders is concerned, African Americans differ in important respects.

Previous research has clearly demonstrated that the structure of employers' racial attitudes has important effects on the employment patterns of African-American workers. Not known, however, is whether the attitudes of black employers toward black workers are similar to or different from those of their majority group counterparts. In Chapter 10, "African-American Employers' Attitudes toward African-American

Workers," Joleen Kirschenman speaks directly to this deficiency in the literature.

Using data from a sample of employers collected under the auspices of the University of Chicago's Urban Poverty and Family Structure Project, Kirschenman provides a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with 14 African-American employers in the Chicago metropolitan area. Surprisingly, these analyses suggest that, overall, these black employers harbor views of black workers that are nearly as negative as the views of white employers. Although there is evidence that black employers' attitudes are somewhat less pejorative than those of whites — and that, when asked, these employers invoke structural rather than individualistic explanations for the perceived deficiencies of African-American workers — Kirschenman argues that the result is the same: race-based discrimination in employment.

Kirschenman interprets these findings to provide support for the notion that it is class differences between black employers and workers and the tenuous position of the black middle class that account for African-American employers' prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behavior.

In the final chapter of this volume, Chapter 11, "Fifty Years after Myrdal: Blacks' Racial Policy Attitudes in the 1990s," Steven A. Tuch, Lee Sigelman, and Jack K. Martin explore the attitudes of African Americans, particularly those in the middle class, toward policies designed to ameliorate racial disadvantage. This chapter was adapted from a paper originally presented at the 1994 Morehouse University conference commemorating the 1944 publication of Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* and first published in the journal *Challenge*.

Using national survey data drawn from a variety of sources, these authors examine race and class influences on attitudes toward a range of race-targeted public policies. As expected, Tuch, Sigelman, and Martin find that, compared to whites, African Americans demonstrate high levels of support for race-targeted policies. On the other hand, blacks are by no means uniform in their support. Most important, opinions about policies on which blacks tend to disagree (for example, preferential hiring) cannot be explained as a function of class position. Thus, there is little evidence of an emerging political divide between black members of the middle and working classes.

In Chapter 1 of this volume, A. Wade Smith noted that the mid-1990s can be characterized as a period in which racial attitude research reveals "discord on the important issues and much less than full agreement on the general direction of race relations in America." Each of the chapters in this volume highlights this issue, and each offers suggestions about its implications for furthering our understanding of contemporary race relations. As the end of the twentieth century approaches, the United States

remains at a crossroads over the issue of race. It is imperative that we continue to identify those individual and structural processes that create or perpetuate barriers to meaningful improvement in black-white relations and racial equality or, alternatively, that offer opportunities for effective remedies to racism and its consequences. In one way or another, each of the contributions to this volume moves us further down this road.

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I

THE TRANSFORMATION OF RACIAL ATTITUDES IN THE UNITED STATES

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1

Prologue: Reflections on Racial Attitude Research

A. Wade Smith

Change is the most constant of all things.

— Anonymous

Tolerance evolves, like culture or language. In similar fashion, Americans' regard for racial others appears to be an ever-unfolding drama that, at some times more than others, tightens its grasp on our nation's conscience. We need not be in the midst of a racial crisis — although these seem to occur with increasing frequency — to be stricken with concern over race relations. Sometimes, as with Alexis de Tocqueville's (1966 [1835]) analysis, it is the measurement of our nation in relative tranquility that reminds us of the unique nature of race in U.S. society. Often, disrupting these periods of calm (or at least our perceptions of calm), racial issues press harder against other forces competing to weave our social fabric — sometimes bringing civil war, sometimes civil rights. Over the years, we have seen enough of this ebb and flow to understand that within many long-term social trends, there is an oscillation or vibration in the pace of change that may give the appearance of retrenchment or reversal but that is really short lived. Thus, we wonder about the future: Are the trends we observe today enduring or ephemeral? Where will race relations go from here?

This chapter is an edited version of notes prepared by the late A. Wade Smith for this volume.