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Determinants of Local-State Structures**



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THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOUTHERN RACIAL STATE: CLASS AND RACE DETERMINANTS OF LOCAL-STATE STRUCTURES*

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Theories of the state are unable to explain intrastate variation in policy implementation because they tend to focus on the highest levels of the state hierarchy and ignore local-state institutions. Race-relations theories ignore the state entirely. This research views the local state as constrained by the superordinate national state and by local class structures. The racial nature of the local state, here termed the racial state, was designed and defended by plantation operators and white farm owners. Institutional features of the racial state conformed to the interests of planters and white farmers. These two classes also impeded the national state's dismantling of the racial state during the 1960s. Racial differences in enfranchisement were closely articulated with the local class structures typical of labor-intensive cotton agriculture rather than with competition and status variables suggested by race-relations theories.

The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth, and in power But in the views of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law.

John Marshall Harlan (1896)

INTRODUCTION

Current theories of the state emphasize the importance of the national state both as an object of struggle by contending political forces and as a determinant and regulator of economic and social processes (e.g., Przeworski 1985; Skocpol 1979; Wright 1978). But theories that focus on the national state cannot explain the enormous historical variation in the local implementation of national

policies. For example, powerful landlords and farm owners shaped the local implementation of the New Deal farm programs (James 1986; Wright 1986). Unemployment compensation and old-age assistance was manipulated to suit local employers (Alston and Ferrie 1985; Piven and Cloward 1971). The desegregation of public schools has been very uneven (Orfield 1969, 1978). Variation in the implementation of these and other policies cannot be explained by exclusive attention to the national level because all policies were intended to be uniformly enforced. In each case, local political institutions played an important role in bending the enforcement of national legislation to comply with dominant local interests.

The variability in the extension of the franchise to white and blacks in the South across periods and localities illustrates this process. Black voter-registration drives were very successful in border states during the 1960s, but met implacable resistance in core southern states (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1961; 1968). This research addresses the importance of local-state structures in maintaining social order and protecting local economic and social institutions.¹

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¹ The term "state structure" refers to the interlocking network of formal organizations that are usually legally constituted and that exercise a virtual monopoly of the means of physical violence and coercion within a certain territory. These interlocking structures include the police, the courts, legislative bodies, city councils, county administrative organizations, executive agencies, and the like.

John Marshall Harlan's famous dissent in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (Harlan [1896] 1970) opposed the legal institutionalization of two distinct racial classes of citizens, but the majority decision made white people the "dominant race" as an aspect of state policy. Black disfranchisement was part of a maze of racially discriminatory local- and state-level policies. Racial segregation was legally mandated and enforced in most spheres of public and private life. Whites held virtually all elective and appointive offices. Local public officials such as governors, judges, mayors, juries, sheriffs, police officers, and registrars were white (e.g., Myrdal 1944; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1959). Racial distinctions were explicitly incorporated within state structures, both as procedures and practices and as implicit criteria for state officials. This array of institutionalized discriminatory features, which I call the *racial state*, contrasts dramatically with the *liberal democratic state* that guarantees equal citizenship rights (Marx [1843] 1978, p. 33; Bendix 1964, pp. 86-126).

Neither racial nor liberal democratic states exist in pure forms. Real states typically combine features of both, but theoretical distinctions can be clarified. The liberal democratic state confers equal political rights on citizens regardless of their race, income, education, religion, or other class and status distinctions. The racial state uses racial criteria to assign unequal political rights to different races.² The liberal democratic state ignores petitions for redress of grievances based on racial status. The racial state metes out different punishments for equivalent crimes according to the race of criminals and victims. The liberal democratic state assigns children to schools without regard to race; the racial state segregates them. The liberal state protects the voting rights of all; the racial state disfranchises blacks.

Marxist theories argue that the state is determined by class structures in important and systematic ways. Three periods of political crisis in the South are analyzed below to clarify the relationship between class structure and the racial state. The first is the period before and during the Civil War that

led to the abolition of slavery, a severe blow to the racial state. The second occurred during the late nineteenth century and led to racial segregation and black disfranchisement, a strengthening of the racial state. The third dismantled the racial state during the 1960s.

A key measure of the strength of the racial state is the difference between black and white voter-registration rates. Southern blacks were completely disfranchised during slavery, but registered in proportions almost equal to whites during and immediately after reconstruction. The racial state nearly eliminated blacks as voters by 1900, but not as completely as during slavery. Black rates have again approached those of whites since the 1960s.

Few question that a racial state was essential for the survival of antebellum slave agriculture. A consensus is emerging that the postbellum southern racial state was also created and maintained by forces organized to defend the class structure of labor-intensive cotton agriculture (e.g., Bloom 1987; Kousser 1974; Myrdal 1944). The claim that the racial state protected the rights of cotton planters and farm owners against those of farm laborers, tenants, and sharecroppers is more controversial (e.g., Cohen 1976; Woodman 1977; Wright 1986).

This new racial state was less efficient than the slave state in maintaining white privileges and enforcing black subordination. Still, black disfranchisement and state-enforced racial segregation created a politically weak and docile black labor force that was unable to demand higher wages effectively. Physical and economic coercion was the modal strategy used by planters to maintain the profitability of cotton-plantation agriculture. Politically impotent blacks could not defend themselves against the authority of white planters. Even as late as the 1950s, the most productive and profitable cotton farms were labor-intensive and were owned and operated by white planters who exploited the labor of black sharecroppers and tenant farmers (LeRay and Crowe 1959; Pederson and Raper 1954). Southern tobacco farm owners also resorted to coercion when confronted with rising labor costs or declining commodity prices (Badger 1980; Shifflett 1982). By contrast, other white employers of black laborers could use capital-intensive strategies to cope with the vagaries of labor and commodity markets. Consequently, white farm owners (especially

² Restricting the discussion to race ignores state-enforced discrimination on the basis of other status distinctions, such as gender or religion, that distinguish real states from liberal democracies.

cotton and tobacco farmers) who were actual or potential employers of black farm workers and sharecroppers were probably the most determined defenders of the racial state (Paige 1975).

The specific research question is to what extent did rural class relations, especially those associated with labor-intensive cotton and tobacco agriculture, account for the regional variation in the strength of the southern racial state? First, I examine race-relations theories for alternative explanations of black disfranchisement. Second, I propose a theory of the relationship between local-state and class structures that explains variation in the strength of the racial state across the South. Third, I investigate the class bases of the racial state during the first two crisis periods. I identify specific mechanisms that linked local-state structures to the interests of white farmers and plantation owners. Finally, I assess the linkages between class structure and the racial state during the third crisis period by analyzing the determinants of racial differences in voter-registration rates in 1958, 1964, and 1967 in seven core southern states.

RACE-RELATIONS THEORIES AND BLACK DISFRANCHISEMENT

Theories of race relations provide two kinds of explanations for black disfranchisement. *Stratification* theories argue that stratified social structures create *status distinctions* that are important determinants of the attitudes and values of discriminators. Certain white status groups (for example, the more educated) are more tolerant of blacks or have a weaker "taste for discrimination" (Becker 1971) than others and, therefore, discriminate less. *Competition* theories argue that discrimination stems from competition between different racial groups over *scarce resources* such as political power, land, and jobs (e.g. Horowitz 1985; Wilson 1978; Hannan 1979). Consequently, the principal agents of institutionalized racial discrimination are *prejudiced white status groups*, according to stratification theories, or *white groups confronted with competitive pressure from blacks*, according to competition theories.

Stratification theories identify several social and economic determinants of black disfranchisement. For example, higher black median income and education levels were modestly associated with higher black voter-

registration rates in 1958, while higher white education levels and greater concentrations of farm workers and tenants were associated with lower black rates (Matthews and Prothro 1963a). Higher black proportions had a *negative* effect on black voter-registration rates before the 1965 Voting Rights Act (VRA) (Matthews and Prothro 1963a), but a *positive* effect afterward (Daniel 1969). Higher black proportions supposedly stimulated the discriminatory attitudes of whites before the VRA, but encouraged black mobilization afterwards by increasing blacks' perception of favorable election results. These accounts assign causal primacy to attitudes and values; state effects are minor or exogenous to the theory.

A classic version of competition theory states that fear of black political domination motivates all whites to discriminate, but fear of economic competition spurs only the white working class. Both fears lead to increasing discrimination by whites as the minority percentage increases (Blalock 1967, p. 30).

Wilson (1978) agrees that white workers are the biggest enemy of black civil rights. Jim Crow segregation and black disfranchisement in the South accompanied the rise of lower-class whites to power after the Civil War and represented the interests of whites in eliminating economic competition from black workers (Wilson 1978, pp. 59, 137). A small black population in the North prevented the northern white working class from imposing state-enforced segregation and disfranchisement, while a much larger black proportion lost the competitive struggle to white workers in the South (pp. 55-60, 82-87). The theory is flawed. It cannot be salvaged by substituting the white rural classes for the industrial working class as the discriminatory agent because the interests of other powerful actors were at stake. White sharecroppers and laborers may have competed with blacks, but white planters and farmers did not. White planters and farm owners had a common interest in depressing the incomes of sharecroppers and agricultural laborers regardless of their race. Given the divergent interests of white southerners, white solidarity probably reflected the domination of white farmers over the rural under-classes of both races rather than competition between lower-class whites and blacks.

Both stratification and competition theories of American race relations ignore theories of

the state and politics. Both assume that potential discriminators will find institutional mechanisms to express their prejudices. By default, they adopt a pluralist perspective that views the state as either a mechanism for aggregating group preferences or a reflection of societal norms and values (Alford and Friedland 1985, p. 43). Race-relations theories ignore the possibility that state structures can independently affect the mobilization of racial groups or the implementation of racial policies.³

THE LOCAL STATE IN THE UNITED STATES

Local-state structures established the "rules of the game" for practicing racial discrimination in the South before the 1960s. The nature of the local state varied as a function of the relative strength of two sets of constraints: those imposed by the superordinate state and those imposed by local class structure.

Constraints of the Superordinate State

The exercise of sovereignty in the United States is partitioned among federal, state, and local-state institutions that are further subdivided horizontally and vertically. This fragmentation of sovereignty provides differential access to state power for various agents and interest groups and makes uneven policy implementation across local jurisdictions likely. Uneven policy implementation is compounded if local states enjoy considerable autonomy as they do in a federal system like the United States. Local autonomy in the U.S. results not just from decentralization and fragmentation, but also from the local state's capacity to control the recruitment of personnel to local offices and power to tax its citizens to cover the costs of local government (Peterson 1981, p. 68; Williams 1980).

The national state has other mechanisms that constrain local-state autonomy besides appropriation of local power to appoint officials and to tax citizens. Direct federal

intervention bypasses the local state altogether. Occupation by federal troops is an extreme example of this mechanism although it is rarely used. The federal court system also poses a threat to local autonomy but only if its interpretation of the Constitution or federal legislation is disruptive of local power relationships. Southern influence in Congress reduces the threat of direct intervention or disruptive legislation (Bensel 1984). Even if federal legislation were potentially disruptive, the requirement to litigate separately each citizen's claim reduces the courts' effectiveness in compelling uniform compliance with national policy.

The local state in the South had a high degree of autonomy from the national state during the first half of the twentieth century because national policy enforcement mechanisms were weak. Direct intervention was not possible during this period, and the federal courts were ineffective in protecting the civil rights of blacks. Most revenues were raised through local and state taxes and almost all personnel recruitment was locally controlled. The U.S. Department of Agriculture began making direct payments to farmers during the 1930s, but these were placed under the control of local committees that were locally elected, locally controlled, and especially sensitive to the needs of the economically powerful (e.g., James 1986; Wright 1986; Fligstein 1981). Federal welfare payments were also adjusted to the needs of local employers and planters (Alston and Ferrie 1985; Piven and Cloward 1971).

Constraints of Local Class Structure

Because federal constraints on local states were weakly enforced, local political forces strongly affected the nature of local-state structures. Four mechanisms ensured that local states were especially attuned to the interests of cotton planters, farmers, and other employers of black workers. First, all local states had to enhance local economic productivity to protect the fiscal base of local government, which is tied to property values through taxes (Peterson 1981, pp. 17-38). Because labor-intensive cotton and tobacco production were the most important economic activities during most of this period, local officials had to promote them.

Second, the political fortunes of local officials were intimately linked to policies

³ Hannan (1979), Nagel and Olzak (1982), and Nielsen (1985) acknowledge that the state can affect the structure of race relations and are an exception to this criticism. They view the state as an effect of the competition of ethnic groups but with the state as an additional organized participant in the competitive struggle (Hannan 1979, p. 266).

that enhanced the economic fortunes of local economic elites (Peterson 1981; Block 1977). Local officials were vulnerable to the distribution of local political power and were forced to cooperate with local constituencies to be effective and enhance their job security (e.g. Lipsky 1980; Williams 1980). Cotton planters and white farmers were the most powerful constituency in the rural South. Besides being the local opinion leaders, they routinely bought votes, bribed officials, and used economic coercion to punish their enemies (e.g., Myrdal 1944; Davis, Gardner, and Gardner 1941).

Third, many local officials such as the sheriff, the justice of the peace, and minor court officials were paid by fees for each arrest, warrant served, and conviction obtained (e.g., Myrdal 1944, p. 548; Kirby 1987, p. 217; Davis, Gardner, and Gardner 1941, p. 496). The fee system combined with the criminal-surety system (discussed in the next section) to create a community of interests between law-enforcement officials and cotton planters. Law-enforcement officials needed numerous arrests and convictions; cotton planters needed cheap laborers. Because blacks were politically weak, they satisfied both needs. Sheriffs augmented their incomes by arresting blacks for petty crimes; planters who paid the fines of offenders obtained cheap labor services in return for their beneficence. The remaining prisoners labored on the county farms and roads to reduce local government costs (Kirby 1987; Daniel 1972).

Finally, cotton planters, white farmers, and their allies used physical violence to wrest the reins of local government from their domestic enemies. Nineteenth-century southern history is replete with examples of violence and vigilantism. Blacks, Republicans, and Populists were lynched, murdered, tortured, and terrorized until all were eliminated as viable competition to the Democratic party, the champion of planter interests and white supremacy. Violence was a key conservative weapon from the end of the Civil War until after the Great Depression (e.g., Myrdal 1944; Kousser 1974). Even during the 1960s, fear of violence was still a major barrier to the enfranchisement of southern blacks (e.g., St. Angelo and Puryear 1982; Salamon and Van Evera 1973; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1959, 1965, 1968).

The local state in the South did not mediate

among contending interest groups, but institutionalized racial bias. The theory accounts for the great variation in institutionalized racial bias across periods and localities in the U.S. by identifying two sets of constraints. When the central state's constraints were strong, local class structures had little effect. When the central state's constraints were weak, local class structures had greater effects on the local state.

CLASS BASES AND FEATURES OF THE RACIAL STATE IN SLAVERY AND FREEDOM

The structure of the southern racial state was transformed as a result of fiercely contested political struggles during and immediately after the Civil War, during the late nineteenth century, and again during the 1960s. On each occasion, the scope and strength of racially oppressive, local-state structures were altered as contending political forces attempted to modify the racial selectiveness of the state in their favor.⁴

Class Structure and Features of the Slave State

All observers agree that the state institutions of the antebellum South were biased in favor of the interests of slave owners and against those of black slaves. The pre-Civil War U.S. Constitution left most issues concerning slavery to the states.⁵ The states delegated primary authority and responsibility for slave discipline to slave owners, but this authority was reinforced by the state-level judicial and executive systems and defended by state police power. Slave patrols and state militias augmented the authority of slave owners by

⁴ Political crises provide valuable opportunities to examine the relationship between the state and political forces based in particular class structures because the greatest changes in states occur during those times. Biases built into the state during crises tend to persist and may seem normal and inevitable after the passage of time. Consequently, the class determinants of state structures may be masked during "normal" intercrisis periods, but should be apparent during periods of crisis.

⁵ The U.S. Constitution acknowledged the existence of slavery three ways: (1) by adjusting Census counts for Congressional apportionment and levying direct taxes (slaves were counted as three-fifths of a person); (2) by preventing the banning of the slave trade until after 1808; and (3) by providing for the return of fugitive slaves (Meier and Rudwick 1976, p. 54).

apprehending runaways, punishing slaves for offenses committed away from the plantation, and smashing rebellions (Meier and Rudwick 1976, pp. 59-63; Litwak 1980, pp. 27-28; Stamp 1956, pp. 141-236).

The slave state was essential for the continued existence of plantation slavery and the small elite class of slaveowners who reaped the majority of its benefits (3 percent of white families owned over half of the slaves in 1860) (Stamp 1956). The instability of southern political authority during the Civil War demonstrated this intimate connection (Litwak 1980), and the abolition of slavery confirmed it.

Class Structure and Features of the Racial State

The planter class was weakened politically and economically by the abolition of slavery, but not destroyed. Post-Civil War amendments to the Constitution, Congressionally mandated reconstruction, and U.S. Army occupation made it impossible to reimpose the essential features of slavery, but plantation land was never redistributed to the former slaves.⁶ If blacks could be forced to work for low wages using the labor-intensive technology inherited from slavery, the cotton-plantation economy could be resurrected. Conservative political forces based in the plantation regions made this their major political goal for the next generation.

A new form of the racial state was in place throughout the South by the end of the nineteenth century. This new racial state had three important features that enforced black subordination: (1) racial segregation; (2) defense of landlord and employer prerogatives against those of sharecroppers and employees; and (3) black disfranchisement. As a result, blacks were particularly vulnerable to physical and economic coercion and exploitation, although never as completely as during slavery.

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy* eliminated the last legal barrier to Jim Crow segregation and removed the threat of federal intervention in defense of the civil rights of blacks. All important areas of public and private life, with the prominent exception

of labor markets, were racially segregated by law during the first two decades of the twentieth century (e.g., Woodward 1974; Myrdal 1944). Southern states and localities confined blacks to inferior school systems, housing areas, public services and facilities, and stamped blacks with a "badge of servitude" (Harlan [1896] 1970).

The second feature of the racial state, the defense of landlord and employer prerogatives, consisted of a complicated network of laws and practices that interfered with the operation of southern labor markets. Employers and landlords were protected by "enticement statutes" that made it a crime to hire a worker already under contract and by "emigrant agent laws" that retarded the exodus of black workers by charging northern labor recruiters prohibitively expensive license fees (Cohen 1976). Crop-lien laws protected the interests of landlords against those of sharecroppers and laborers. Crop-liens were the only source of credit available to sharecroppers and laborers to cover production costs and to provide for their families' sustenance during the long growing season. Sharecropping, financed through crop-liens, became the preferred form of plantation labor organization (Schwartz 1976; Ransom and Sutch 1977; Wiener 1978).

A variety of laws regulated the behavior of laborers, sharecroppers, and tenant farmers. Contract-enforcement statutes were repeatedly devised that made it a criminal, rather than a civil offense, to break a labor contract (Cohen 1976; Daniel 1972). Broadly drawn vagrancy statutes were used to supply plantations with workers during labor shortages (Cohen 1976). Even as late as the 1940s, city police departments were still conducting vagrancy drives to provide cotton planters with plantation workers (Hoffman 1969). Finally, criminal-surety systems allowed employers to pay fines for individuals convicted of minor crimes such as vagrancy and drunkenness. In return, the miscreant was contractually obligated to repay the benefactor, and labor services were the only possible means of repayment (Cohen 1976; Woolfer 1936).

Combined with racial segregation and disfranchisement, these laws made blacks vulnerable to economic discrimination. As a result, southern labor markets became more segregated during the early twentieth century. Blacks were confined to the most menial,

⁶ The 13th Amendment outlawed involuntary servitude, the 14th guaranteed equal protection of the law, and the 15th extended the franchise to the freedmen.

labor-intensive, and poorest-paying jobs in agriculture and industry. They had lower incomes, poorer living standards, and were preferred to whites as plantation laborers.

Black disfranchisement was the third principal feature of the racial state. Because of the post-Civil War amendments and the threat of federal intervention, the mechanisms of black disfranchisement had to be "color blind" in form but color sensitive in substance. The most effective mechanisms were poll taxes, difficult registration requirements, property requirements, literacy tests, and restricting primary elections to whites (e.g., Kousser 1974; Hine 1979). Many poor and illiterate whites were also disfranchised by these devices, but blacks were eliminated as a political force.

Black disfranchisement was the key to the stability and effectiveness of the racial state (Woodward 1974, p. 83; Key 1949). Because blacks were unable to vote, they could not sanction state officials through routine political processes. Consequently, segregation statutes were administered in a separate and *unequal* fashion. White landlords and employers could discriminate against black sharecroppers and laborers with impunity. Whites were almost never punished for even the most savage physical violence against blacks (Davis, Gardner, and Gardner 1941; Myrdal 1944).

Just as cotton planters provided a determined defense of the slave state, the plantation regions provided the strongest support for the racial state in the late nineteenth century. Planters supplied the leadership and theory for black disfranchisement in almost every case and always gave it their political support (Kousser 1974). Eliminating blacks from the electoral process also eliminated party competition, ensured that lower-class interests would not be effectively represented in political decision making, and protected the interests of "Democrats [who were] usually from the black belt and always socioeconomically privileged" (Kousser 1974, p. 238).

Yeoman farmers in the white-majority, non-plantation counties had mixed motives for supporting the racial state. They too had an interest in subordinating blacks because they were occasional or potential employers of black workers. Black disfranchisement might also reduce the political power of cotton-belt whites who controlled the ballots of large numbers of black voters through fraud and intimidation. But the constitution-

ally permissible disfranchisement devices were very imprecise. "Color-blind" tests such as poll taxes and literacy tests were designed for blacks, but were used to disfranchise many white agrarian radicals and Populists who threatened the hegemony of cotton-belt Democrats. White farmers from the nonplantation regions supported black disfranchisement, but less zealously than cotton planters did (e.g., Kousser 1974; Key 1949; Hahn 1983).

Southern cities provided the weakest support for the racial state. Southern industrialists, less dependent on labor-intensive technologies, were less likely than cotton planters and farmers to use coercive methods of labor control (Paige 1975). Plantation owners preferred black laborers, but industrialists were content to hire whites. Nevertheless, cities, containing only 20 percent of the southern population in 1900, were economically and socially linked to the rural areas. Rural demagogues found urban allies to impose racial segregation and black disfranchisement in the cities (Rabinowitz 1978). Blacks were effectively barred from industrial employment, especially in the higher-paying jobs, and unions were segregated (Northrup, Rowan, Barnum, and Howard 1970; Wright 1986). Urban imposition of Jim Crow segregation and black disfranchisement consummated the regional victory of plantation racial politics.

The Persistence and Decline of the Racial State

The racial state denied blacks civil rights for more than 50 years through depression, war, rising urbanization and industrialization, and the declining economic importance of cotton and tobacco farming. Capitalist economic development severed the link between the economic fortunes of most white southerners and the subordination of black agricultural workers (Bloom 1987; Mandle 1978). Yet, the racial state continued to reward bigotry (Barkan 1984) and make discrimination appear endless and natural in the everyday affairs of whites.

Black and white voter-registration rate trends reflect the strength of the racial state during the first two-thirds of this century (see Figure 1). Louisiana was the only state that routinely collected registration statistics by race for the early part of the century.

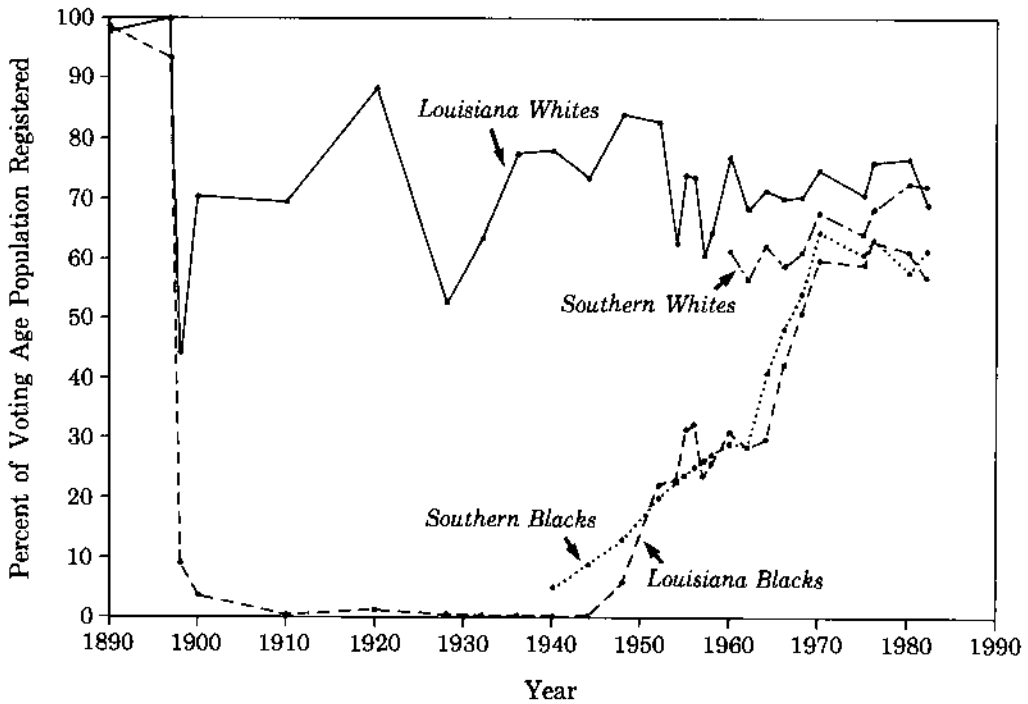


Fig. 1. Voter Registration Rates for Whites and Blacks in Louisiana and the South, 1890 to 1982
 Source: James (1981, p. 428)

Registration trends in Louisiana typified those in the other southern states (Myrdal 1944, pp. 486-90). New registration laws in 1898 and the disfranchising constitution of 1902 reduced the registration rate of Louisiana's black voters to less than 2 percent for 40 years. The white rate also suffered during this period, but by a smaller amount. For the South as a whole, the black registration rate averaged about 5 percent between 1900 and 1940, while the white rate probably ranged between 50 and 70 percent (Matthews and Prothro 1966, p. 17).

Beginning in the early 1940s, blacks had some success in transforming the racial state (Figure 1) in areas outside of the cotton-plantation regions. Registration drives in the larger southern cities produced significant gains after the Supreme Court outlawed the white primary in 1944, but stalled during the 1950s as white resistance stiffened in the deep South and in rural areas.

All of the essential features of the southern racial state were dismantled during the 1960s. Under massive pressure from the civil rights movement, the President and Congress

strengthened the linkages between the national state and the local state. Vigorous federal enforcement of newly passed civil rights legislation and direct intervention by federal marshals and federalized national guardsmen reduced local-state autonomy.⁷ The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) abolished local authority to exclude blacks from the franchise; literacy tests were outlawed and prior approval from the Depart-

⁷ All of the mechanisms that reduce local-state autonomy were employed at one time or another during the civil rights struggles of the 1960s. Federal marshals and federalized national guardsmen were used on several occasions to desegregate southern public schools and universities. Local control over the appointment of officials was lost when a Federal Court forced a Florida sheriff to discharge a deputy who belonged to the KKK in St. Augustine (Friedman 1965, pp. 210-11). The most effective tool in forcing public-school desegregation was the withholding of federal funds provided to local schools under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. National-state institutions such as the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights were created and others (such as the Office of Education and the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department) were reorganized or expanded to enforce compliance with national policies (Orfield 1969).

ment of Justice or U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia was required before changing voting laws. Federal poll watchers were authorized, and the federal government was given the power to intervene directly to register blacks. Civil rights organizations led hundreds of voter-registration drives, first in the cities and then in the most rural areas of Mississippi. These efforts produced large increases in black rates (see Figure 1), which finally began to approach those of whites by the late 1960s (e.g., U.S. Commission on Civil Rights 1968; Lawson 1976). The following section analyzes the determinants of the racial state as it was being dismantled during the 1960s.

COTTON PLANTERS, WHITE FARMERS AND THE RACIAL STATE

Data and Measures

The difference between black and white enfranchisement rates indicates the state's racial bias. If no bias exists, blacks and whites should register at equal rates. If the state is biased against blacks, white rates should exceed black rates.

The percentage of the voting-age population registered to vote is a popular measure and simple to interpret, but percentages have two undesirable properties. They suffer from ceiling and floor effects when related to other variables in a causal analysis and do not express diminishing returns to scale. Logits correct both problems. The logit for blacks is

$$L(b) = \ln \{P(b) / [1 - P(b)]\} \quad (1)$$

where $P(b)$ is the registered proportion of the black voting-age population and \ln indicates natural logarithms.

The degree of racial bias is the difference between the logits for blacks and whites,⁸

$$\Delta L = L(b) - L(w), \quad (2)$$

where $L(b)$ and $L(w)$ are computed for blacks and whites respectively using equation (1).

⁸ Readers of earlier versions of this paper suggested that black voter-registration rates are a better measure of the racial state than ratios or differences in black and white rates. I have resisted those suggestions because the available disfranchisement devices also disfranchised many whites. A contrast between the black and white rates is necessary to measure the degree of bias against blacks.

Equation (2) expresses a concept similar to the ratio of black to white voter-registration proportions, $P(b)/P(w)$. Both reflect the chances of a black person being registered compared to those of a white. A weighted least-squares routine was used to correct the regressions for heteroskedasticity.⁹

Appropriate voter-registration data were assembled on 575 of the 585 counties in the core southern states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina (James 1985). The ten missing counties had populations that were less than one percent black in 1960. Data were available for two panels before the VRA (1958 and 1964) and one after (1967) using information published by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1959, 1961, 1963, 1968).¹⁰ Most of the remaining data came from the U.S. Population and Agriculture Censuses or Matthews and Prothro (1963a, 1963b, 1966) and are discussed in James (1981, Appendix B).¹¹

⁹ The asymptotic variance of equation (1) is

$$V(L) = 1/NP(1 - P)$$

where N is the denominator of the proportion P (Theil 1970). Because the distribution of equation (1) is asymptotically normal, the variance of (2) is the sum of the variances given by $V(L)$ for blacks and whites minus twice the covariance. With independent processes, the covariance disappears asymptotically. Thus, the asymptotic variance of a linear combination of two logits is the sum of the variances. The regression weight for (2) is therefore the inverse of the sum of the individual variances given by $V(L)$ for blacks and whites.

¹⁰ Counties are appropriate political units for testing the theory developed here. Of all of the different units of local government that might be analyzed, county-level governments have played the most important role in disciplining the southern rural black population. The U.S. Department of Agriculture farmer committee system is organized at the county level, as is the county sheriff's department, the most important law-enforcement agency in the rural South. While town and city governments gained authority over an increasing proportion of the black population as the rural-urban migration proceeded, relatively few southern counties have been dominated by large municipal governments. Even when municipal political structure is more important than county-level institutions, there is no reason to believe that it is constrained by class relations in a manner different from or contrary to that of the counties. If a county is dominated by the class structure of the cotton plantation, it is expected that the municipal and county governments would be similarly constrained. At any rate, it is not possible to distinguish municipal from nonmunicipal voter registration with the available data.

¹¹ Because census years did not correspond to the years for which registration data were available, values

Black tenant farmers are the best indicator of the presence of labor-intensive plantation agriculture.¹² Plantations were owned by whites, but black tenants greatly outnumbered white farmers in areas where the plantation system was strongest. All white farm owners were actual or potential employers of black agricultural laborers, either as tenant farmers or wage workers. Thus, the presence of white farm owners, black farm tenants, and black farm laborers should be associated with a greater difference between white and black rates indicating greater racial bias in the local state. The other class categories should reduce the distance between white and black rates or have no effect.

The demographic weight of each class category is expressed as a proportion of the total county labor force. All class and occupational groups cannot be included in the regressions without creating perfect colinearity. Consequently, the effect of each class category must be interpreted in relation to the occupational groups excluded from the equation.

Because race-relations theories identify the white industrial working class as a primary carrier of racial discrimination, racial components of this class are included in the models. The textile and wood products industries employed more workers than any others in the South during the 1950s and 1960s. Black industrial workers were concentrated in the wood products industry, especially lumber, pulp wood, saw milling, and related forest-work that used unskilled manual labor released from farm work during the winter months. Whites in the wood industry were more likely to be furniture and fixtures

workers. The textile industry was an enclave for white workers from which most blacks were excluded before the 1960s (Northrup et al. 1970). Employees in other industries were lumped into a residual category, "other manufacturing workers," because of their smaller contribution to county employment levels.

The racial policies of large corporations are sometimes decisive for local race relations (e.g., Norgren 1967, pp. 465-69; Jacoway and Colburn 1982). The typical response of southern business leaders was "accommodation to what was perceived as inevitable change" (Jacoway 1982, pp. 8-14). Because racial data on the work force of large corporations were unavailable, I used the percentage of the total labor force employed in plants owned by firms on the *Fortune* list of the 500 largest corporations by sales. Local states were probably more sensitive to the political needs and preferences of national corporations as the number of jobs provided increased.

Organized labor is another national class actor that constrained local states. Labor unions often denied equal employment opportunities to blacks and opposed extending them civil rights at the community level (Hill 1977; Marshall 1965, 1967). Because county-level union membership data were unavailable, union strength was estimated by the count of AFL-CIO union locals present.

Variables tapping aspects of the social and economic structure of counties were included as suggested by Matthews and Prothro (1963a, 1963b, 1966) and others. These include median school years completed by race, median individual income by race, and whether a county had a black population majority. More education and higher incomes allegedly produced greater racial tolerance.

Race-relations theories predict that increasing black concentrations motivate whites to discriminate, which depresses black enfranchisement relative to white ones (e.g., Matthews and Prothro 1963a; Blalock 1967). On the other hand, resource-mobilization theories argue that population size facilitates the mobilization of insurgents (e.g., Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Daniel 1969). From this perspective, black majorities should be associated with greater black mobilization and smaller differences between black and white registration rates. Other measures of the mobilization of racial groups are dummy

for census variables were estimated for the panel years by linear interpolation. Other data were obtained from the U.S. Department of Labor, *Register of Reporting Labor Organizations* (1964) and *Fortune Plant and Product Directory* (1966) published by Time/Life Corporation. All variables correspond to the appropriate panel year unless otherwise indicated.

¹² A large number of regression models was estimated to identify the determinants of the farm-tenure variables used in the voter-registration equations reported above. Higher proportions of cotton and tobacco farms were very strongly related to tenant farmers of both races, strongly related to farm laborers of both races, and modestly related to the presence of white farm owners. Mechanization variables were negatively related to the presence of white and black tenant farmers but positively related to farm laborers of both races. Black farm owners were negatively related to mechanization but unrelated to cotton and tobacco farming.

variables indicating the presence (1 = present, 0 = absent) of organizations with explicitly racial purposes. Examples of black race organizations are the NAACP, CORE, SNCC, and the Urban League. The White Citizen's Councils and the Ku Klux Klan are typical white race organizations. These variables were collected by Matthews and Prothro (1966, pp. 164-65) for organizations operating in southern counties before February, 1961.

The Basic Class-Structure Model

Table 1 contains the results of regressing the difference between black and white voter-registration rate logits on the class-structure variables.¹³ Black Farm Owners were associated with smaller differences between black and white rates (positive coefficients) in all three panels, although the 1964 coefficient is not significant. Black farmers had to deal with white merchants and bankers but were not dependent on the good will of white employers for their livelihood.

Other black agricultural workers were less autonomous than black farm owners and data in Table 1 reflect their vulnerability. Greater proportions of White Farm Owners, Black

Farm Tenants, and Black Farm Laborers increased the difference between white and black rates as indicated by negative coefficients (only the 1967 Black Farm Labor coefficient was not significant). These variables represented the presence of the classes with the greatest stake in black subordination. They had strong antidemocratic effects.

Competition theories argue that the white working class was the principal political enemy of southern blacks. Yet none of the remaining white class categories were linked to higher levels of discrimination. All of the white coefficients except those of White Farm Owners were positive or nonsignificantly different from the white middle-class variables excluded from the model. The white rural underclass and the white industrial working class were *not* the strongest supporters of the racial state.

The significantly large negative coefficients for Black Wood Workers can not be counted as supporting the competition thesis because blacks were confined to the most menial occupations in the wood products industry. Black wood workers were usually common laborers and wood cutters in the many small sawmills scattered across the South. The employment was seasonal, very labor intensive, and often merely an extension of agricultural employment.

Only three coefficients support the competition thesis: Black Other Manufacturing

¹³ Negative coefficients imply a greater distance between black and white registration rates as the variable of interest increases. Positive coefficients imply diminishing distance between black and white rates.

Table 1. WLS Regressions of the Difference Between Black and White Registration Rate Logits on Class Variables: 575 Counties in Seven Southern States

	1958		1964		1967	
	<i>b</i>	s.e.	<i>b</i>	s.e.	<i>b</i>	s.e.
<i>Labor Force Proportion that is</i>						
Black Farm Owners	10.23*	3.60	2.90	5.61	20.85*	6.71
Black Farm Tenants	-15.08*	3.77	-17.25*	5.41	-44.83*	19.02
Black Farm Laborers	-6.36*	1.81	-7.96*	1.78	-1.74	1.59
Black Textile Workers	-10.09	10.54	-1.29	8.14	-10.64*	4.05
Black Wood Workers	-16.76*	3.06	-13.91*	4.04	-16.78*	3.99
Black Other Manuf. Workers	-10.46*	3.05	-6.14*	2.91	-2.08	2.25
White Farm Owners	-7.24*	1.63	-11.05*	2.00	-15.27*	2.08
White Farm Tenants	.91	4.77	.53	6.79	9.68	9.34
White Farm Laborers	7.32	5.02	20.90*	5.34	14.26*	4.62
White Textile Workers	-.73	.73	.05	.92	.43	.73
White Wood Workers	.76	2.32	-1.18	2.75	10.61*	3.26
White Other Manuf. Workers	3.62*	.03	1.42	1.02	.13	.83
Constant	-.99*	.13	-.89*	.13	-.41*	.11
<i>R</i> ² **	.42		.36		.30	

* Statistically significant at the .05 level, one-tailed test.

** *R*² values are for regressions on the weighted observations.

Table 2. WLS Regressions of the Difference Between Black and White Registration Rate Logits on Class and Social Structure Variables: 575 Counties in Seven Southern States

	1958		1964		1967	
	<i>b</i>	s.e.	<i>b</i>	s.e.	<i>b</i>	s.e.
<i>Labor Force Proportion that is</i>						
Black Farm Owners	12.11*	3.46	5.14	5.46	15.62*	6.55
Black Farm Tenants	-9.17*	3.69	-12.82*	5.27	-38.90*	17.99
Black Farm Laborers	-5.61*	1.89	-5.77*	2.09	-1.96	1.96
Black Textile Workers	-2.76	10.19	.24	7.87	-11.92*	3.88
Black Wood Workers	-16.73*	2.99	-12.34*	4.03	-14.84*	3.92
Black Other Manuf. Workers	-.95	3.20	.99	3.36	7.41*	2.57
White Farm Owners	-6.63*	1.78	-10.79*	2.20	-13.21*	2.21
White Farm Tenants	-.82	4.75	-2.37	6.90	9.78	9.40
White Farm Laborers	-2.94	4.91	9.72*	5.33	8.45*	4.51
White Textile Workers	-2.46*	.79	-.22	1.00	2.10*	.84
White Wood Workers	-.75	2.22	-3.96	2.70	6.96*	3.13
White Other Manuf. Workers	2.53*	1.10	3.35*	1.19	2.37*	.93
<i>Fortune</i> 500 Workers in 1965	.47	.51	-.44	.56	-1.52*	.42
AFL/CIO Locals in 1964 (10s)	-.06*	.01	-.01	.01	-.03*	.01
White Median School Years	-.14*	.05	-.06	.06	.22*	.06
Black Median Income (\$1,000s)	.99*	.21	.72*	.19	.38*	.12
White Median Income (\$1,000s)	-.05	.12	-.51*	.11	-.43*	.07
Black Majority Dummy	-.62*	.28	-.39	.31	.04	.30
Black Race Organization (1958)	.30*	.10	.29*	.10	.26*	.08
White Race Organization (1958)	-.46*	.09	-.35*	.08	-.13*	.07
Constant	-.19	.64	.04	.75	-2.52*	.78
R^{2**}	.50		.43		.40	

* Statistically significant at the .05 level, one-tailed test.

** R^2 values are for regressions on the weighted observations.

Workers in 1958 and 1964 and Black Textile Workers in 1967. They are discussed below.

Competition, Organization, and Status Effects

The models of Table 2 add measures suggested by other analysts to the basic model of Table 1.¹⁴ None of the rural class coefficients were greatly affected. White Farm Owners, Black Tenant Farmers, Black Farm Laborers, and Black Wood Workers were still strongly related to racial bias in the extension of the franchise. Social-status and

organization variables do not erase the effects of rural class structure.

Competition theories received less support. The Black Other Manufacturing Worker coefficients were insignificantly small in 1958 and 1964 and strongly positive in 1967 contrary to competition arguments. The White Textile Worker variable produced mixed results: strongly negative in 1958, which supports competition theory; insignificantly small in 1964 and strongly positive in 1967, which contradict competition theory. The negative Black Textile Worker coefficient in 1967 supports competition theory if the white working class is the discriminatory agent, but the positive 1967 White Textile Worker coefficient greatly reduces its impact.¹⁵

The 1967 *Fortune* 500 Workers coefficient is strongly negative, contradicting the claim

¹⁴ Several possible models suggested by the literature were tested during the course of the research and rejected. Only the most parsimonious models are discussed above. The following variables were nonsignificant in all three panels and were omitted from the regression results presented to increase the precision of the estimates: Proportion Catholic of the Church Population in 1958, Black Median School Years, Log of Population Size. All three of these variables should have produced positive effects according to Matthews and Prothro (1963a).

¹⁵ The effects of black and white textile employment essentially cancel each other when they are at their respective 1967 means of 0.015 and 0.082. The total effect of textile employment is $(-11.9 \times .015) = -.179$ for blacks plus $(2.1 \times .082) = 1.72$ for whites, equaling $-.007$, a negligible impact.

that national and multinational corporations were willing to accept black civil rights once racial change appeared inevitable (Jacoway and Colburn 1982; Cobb 1982). The anti-democratic effects of large corporations (Griffin, Wallace and Rubin 1986) appeared to increase rather than decrease after 1965 in these data.¹⁶

The effects of working-class organization were more consistent than the simple presence of workers. Larger numbers of AFL/CIO Union Locals had significantly negative effects in 1958 and 1967, but not in 1964. Southern unions, which were created and matured during the era of black disfranchisement and segregation, continued to threaten the job security and opportunities of black workers even after 1967 (Hill 1977). Black workers may have been reluctant voters where white workers were strongly organized into unions.

Black and White Race Organizations had significant effects in all three panels. Black organizations tended to equalize black and white rates, while white organizations produced an advantage for whites. Separate analyses not reported here suggest that larger population sizes and higher White Median School Years completed were the strongest positive determinants of White Race Organization in 1958.¹⁷ Similarly, larger population sizes and higher Black Median School Years completed were the strongest positive determinants of Black Race Organization. White Farm Owners, Black Tenants, and Black Majorities, which occurred only in rural counties where the racial policies of white farmers and plantation operators were domi-

nant, decreased the likelihood of Black Race Organization. The working-class variables had very small or no effect on the mobilization of either race. Consequently, the Race Organization variables do not appear to be surrogates for white working-class mobilization against blacks.

As expected, communities with higher Black Median Incomes had more equal registration rates, but counties with high black incomes were rare. A few counties with cities such as Atlanta or Winston-Salem had black median incomes above \$1,500 in 1958, but the average black median income for all 575 southern counties was \$823. By contrast, white median income averaged \$2,059. Black income is a function of the jobs available to blacks and, therefore, is highly related to county class structure. The lowest black median incomes were found in rural cotton and tobacco counties; the highest were in the cities offering industrial employment opportunities to blacks.

The white education and income status variables produced mixed results. White Median Income was strongly negative in 1964 and 1967. White Median School Years changed from negative in 1958 to positive in 1967. Two years of education were required to counteract the negative effects of \$1,000 income in 1967 ($0.43/0.22 = 1.95$). The net results in the three panels suggest that *upper*—rather than lower-status groups were important carriers of racial discrimination, a result inconsistent with race-relations theories. Black Median School Years had no effect in any of the three panels and was omitted from the models reported.

¹⁶ This negative coefficient may be an effect of workers rather than large corporations. The 1967 variables with the largest correlations with *Fortune* 500 Workers were White Textile Workers ($r = .26$) and White Other Manufacturing Workers ($r = .34$). In analyses not reported here, the coefficients for these two variables remained positive but dropped below statistical significance when *Fortune* 500 Workers were dropped from the model. The AFL/CIO union variable was only slightly related to *Fortune* 500 Workers ($r = .10$) and it had an independent negative effect. Thus, to the extent that the impact of *Fortune* 500 firms was due to workers in 1967, they had to be different than workers in smaller firms for reasons other than their membership in unions. The *Fortune* 500 Workers variable had no effect in 1958 and 1964; dropping it had no impact on the effects of other variables in the models for those years.

¹⁷ Logit analyses of the determinants of both race organization variables were performed using the data set and are available from the author on request.

An Alternative Test of the Competition Thesis

Calculation of competition effects in the preceding section was based on the assumption that a class variable of either race could provide evidence favoring competition. Negative effects of white class variables were attributed to whites winning the competitive struggle with blacks. Negative effects of black class variables were attributed to blacks losing the competition with whites.

Popular theories argue that competition stems from racial *compositions*, not levels of relevant populations (Blalock 1967; Wilson

Table 3. WLS Regressions of the Difference Between Black and White Registration Rate Logits on Class, Social Structure, and Interaction Variables: 575 Counties in Seven Southern States

	1958		1964		1967	
	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>s.e.</i>
<i>Labor Force Proportion that is</i>						
Black Farm Owners	6.94*	4.11	-9.99	6.71	9.68	7.30
Black Farm Tenants	-8.77*	3.68	-3.98	5.92	-45.17*	18.17
Black Farm Laborers	-5.64*	1.88	-3.64	2.60	-1.11	1.99
Black Textile Workers	-1.32	10.17	5.93	7.90	-10.44*	3.95
Black Wood Workers	-16.78*	2.98	-10.42*	3.99	-14.44*	3.95
Black Other Manuf. Workers	-1.85	3.21	.69	3.34	12.45*	4.03
White Farm Owners	-5.11*	1.90	-7.48*	2.33	-11.43*	2.32
White Farm Tenants	-.71	4.73	-10.10	7.17	9.49	9.39
White Farm Laborers	-2.65	4.89	7.40	5.58	5.96	4.59
White Textile Workers	-2.41*	.78	-.44	.99	1.67*	.86
White Wood Workers	-1.21	2.23	-4.89*	2.68	6.05*	3.13
White Other Manuf. Workers	2.92*	1.11	3.23*	1.19	1.12	1.23
Fortune 500 Workers (1965)	.47	.51	-.57	.55	-1.45*	.42
AFL/CIO Locals in 1964 (10s)	-.06*	.01	-.01	.01	-.02*	.01
White Median School Years	-.16*	.05	-.06	.06	.19*	.06
Black Median Income (\$1,000s)	1.18*	.23	.74*	.20	.43*	.12
White Median Income (\$1,000s)	-.04	.12	-.41*	.11	-.43*	.07
Black Majority Dummy	-.62*	.28	-.25	.31	.20	.30
Black Race Organization (1958)	.31*	.10	.28*	.10	.27*	.08
White Race Organization (1958)	-.50*	.09	-.35*	.09	-.16*	.07
<i>Ratio of Black to White</i>						
Farm Owners	.53*	.23	1.09*	.26	.52*	.27
Farm Tenants			-.12*	.04		
Farm Laborers			-.06*	.03		
Other Manuf. Workers					-.69*	.37
Constant	-.37	.64	-.25	.74	-2.15*	.79
R ² **	.50		.45		.40	

* Statistically significant at the .05 level, one-tailed test

** R² values are for regressions on the weighted observations.

1978).¹⁸ A composition measure was obtained by dividing the black proportion of the labor force by the white proportion. For example, a measure of the competition between black and white textile workers is the county ratio of black to white textile workers. The evidence for the following analyses will

be judged to favor competition theories if the total effect of a black class variable or an interaction is negative. This approach biases the analysis in favor of competition theories (See Appendix).

The six possible ratio interactions between black and white class variables were added to the basic equations of Table 2 one at a time. Only those models that produced statistically significant results were presented in Table 3. No interaction effects were significant for Textile Workers or Wood Workers in any of the three panels. The Farm Owners interactions were significant but positive in all three panels. Furthermore, the total effects of Black Farm Owners in 1958 and 1967 were positive for all levels of White Farm Owners. Black Farm Owners produced negative effects in 1964 but only if the concentration of White Farm Owners was greater than 10.9 percent.

¹⁸ All class variables were calculated as proportions of the total labor force, but an increase in the proportion of white textile workers, for example, does not imply that the black proportion will decrease in a complementary fashion. Because significant portions of the labor force are in the excluded occupations, the white and black portions of a particular industry can rise (or fall) simultaneously. These variables, scaled to the size of the county labor force, produce level effects. Composition arguments focus on the effect of racial components of particular segments of the population relative to each other. For example, the effect of the number of black textile workers relative to the number of white textile workers is examined.

Whites were supposedly more vulnerable to competition when their concentrations were small, yet white farmers averaged 8.7 percent of the county labor force and blacks only 1.7 percent. Thus, little or no support for competition theories was produced by the Farm Owners, Textile Workers, or Wood Workers variables using either criterion described in the Appendix.

The Farm Tenants and Farm Laborers interactions were both negative in 1964, as were the total effects of Black Farm Tenants and Farm Laborers. The Other Manufacturing Workers interaction was negative in 1967 and the total effect of Black O. M. Workers was negative when White O. M. Workers were less than 5.5 percent. These results were consistent with competition theories, but the overall support for competition was weak. Evidence for class domination of the local state was much stronger than the evidence for competition theories, both within and across panels, regardless of the measure of competition employed.

CONCLUSION

Theories of the state and race-relations theories are usually discussed as if they were unrelated to each other. Theories of the state focus on the national state, ignore local political institutions, and fail to account for the variation in the local implementation of national policies. Race-relations theories ignore the effects of national- and local-state structures altogether, suggesting instead that status distinctions among whites or labor-market competition between blacks and whites are the primary determinants of racial discrimination. This research suggests that both sets of theories need reexamination.

First, local-state structures have a degree of autonomy from the national state, especially in federal systems like the United States. The central state's capacity to enforce compliance with national policies is reduced to the extent that local states have the power to appoint local officials and to raise revenues. Furthermore, local states are strongly constrained by local class structures. Insurgent movements based in local class structures may find the local state to be more vulnerable to democratic pressure than the national state under some circumstances (e.g., Dearlove and Saunders 1984; Rhodes 1981), but local states also provide opportunities for oligarchs.

White planters and farmers in the American South were able to achieve regional hegemony through their domination of the local state when they were no longer able to contend for national power.

Second, state structures are not neutral mediators of pluralist combat among competing interest groups. Local-state structures in the American South were neither liberal nor democratic before the Civil War, nor were they democratic before the civil rights victories of the 1960s. Instead, the local state in the American South was a racial state that imposed political and social burdens on blacks and conferred advantages on whites.

The southern racial state was not an accident of history but was created by white plantation owners, white farm owners, and their allies to discriminate against blacks. The fortunes of white farmers and planters were strongly dependent on the political impotence and docility of black agricultural workers. Disfranchisement removed blacks as a political force. State-enforced segregation imposed social and economic hardships. Violence and coercion, often performed by state agents and always accomplished with state consent, reduced the aspirations of black workers and increased their vulnerability to the authority of white employers. Landlords and employers were granted special privileges denied to employees. The racial state ensured that black workers were the most disadvantaged of all employees.

Cotton planters were the strongest defenders of the antebellum slave state. Cotton planters and white farmers were the chief architects and beneficiaries of the racial state during the late nineteenth century. When the racial state was under massive attack by the civil rights movement of the 1960s, it remained strongest in those areas where white farm owners and planters dominated local class structures. No other variables were as strongly or consistently related to the difference between black and white voter-registration rates as were the combined effects of the concentration of white farm owners and the black farm tenants and laborers who typically worked for white farm owners. The effects attributable to status distinctions, labor-market competition, and organizational capacities did not eliminate the strong direct effects of class structure.

Class and political structures establish the social context within which organizations and

status distinctions produce their effects. Black race organizations had a democratizing effect; white race organizations were antidemocratic. Labor unions also appear to have had antidemocratic effects. The same local political structure that stripped blacks of basic citizenship rights also denied them equal education and restricted their access to manufacturing jobs. That racial conflict occurred among status groups or between segments of the working class from time to time is not surprising given this context. *To elevate those conflicts to the status of primary determinant of southern race relations is to confuse the proximate cause of conflicts with the fundamental cause.*

Theories of the state and theories of American race relations could be improved by consideration of the effects of local-state structures. Existing theories of the state fail to account for the great variation in the local enforcement of national civil rights policies during the 1960s. Race-relations theories ignore the effects of local-state structures that enforced racial discrimination and maintained southern racial politics. Local-state theory addresses both problems.

APPENDIX

Race-relations theories argue that racial competition is a function of the racial composition of populations; higher proportions of blacks relative to whites produce higher levels of discrimination against blacks. A simple model is

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_1/X_2 + e \quad (3)$$

where Y is a measure of racial bias, X_1 and X_2 are black and white components of the labor force, X_3 some other independent variable of interest, and e is an error term. If b_4 equals zero, the effects of X_1 and X_2 are additive; there is no effect of composition. Competition is absent.

When b_4 is not equal to zero, the effect on Y of changes in the black labor-force component X_1 is obtained by taking the partial derivative of equation (3) with respect to X_1 (Stolzenberg 1979) which yields

$$\partial Y/\partial X_1 = b_1 + b_4/X_2 \quad (4)$$

The effect of changes in X_1 on Y has two components: one is a function of changes in the level of X_1 , and the other is a function of changes in the level of X_1 relative to the level of X_2 .

Different interpretations of equation (4) are possible. The first treats b_4 as a measure of competition because it indicates the effect of X_1 relative to X_2 .¹⁹ Negative values

of b_4 indicate that whites have won the competitive struggle with blacks. The second finds support for competition if the total effect of X_1 is negative and the ratio interaction is non-zero. In other words, if the total effect of an increase in X_1 is negative and non-linear because of the relative sizes of X_1 and X_2 , it is attributed to the competitive advantage of whites over blacks.²⁰

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term in a parabolic regression is viewed as a measure of convexity or concavity.

²⁰ An anonymous reader of an earlier version of this essay suggested a third interpretation of equation (4). In this view, the total effect on Y is interpreted in terms of levels of X_1 and X_2 because, it is argued, no causal autonomy can be attributed to the two components of (4). This position appears unwarranted when theories are strong enough to allow specification of the functional form of the determination of Y by the X s, as is the case with race-relations theories. The failure to find empirical support for that form should count against the theory, but see Stolzenberg (1979, p. 472) for an opposing position.

¹⁹ This interpretation is analogous to the case noted by Stolzenberg (1979, p. 466), in which the second-order

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