Blacks and the United States Supreme Court: Models of Diffuse Support

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Diffuse support is a central concept in efforts to explain institutional stability. Supportive attitudes constitute a reservoir of good will especially useful for institutional maintenance when political authorities make policies with which many disagree. Here we focus on diffuse support for the Supreme Court, an institution for which popular esteem is especially important, and direct our attention toward African Americans, one of the most important minorities in American politics. Using data from an unusually large national sample of blacks in 1987, we describe the attitudes of this group toward the Supreme Court and compare them to those of whites, and we also offer and test two competing theoretical accounts of support in this segment of the population. In contrast to earlier eras, blacks are on balance fairly positive toward the Court but they are decidedly less positive than are whites. We can explain a significant portion of the persistent support among blacks for the Court as a residue of positive affect created largely during the era of the Warren Court. We conclude with some speculation about the implications of what we have learned about blacks and the Court for the broader question of institutional stability and instability.

The fragility of democratic institutions constitutes one of the most important lessons of modern political history. Even the most firmly institutionalized structures can, in the face of stress and strain, change radically within breathtakingly short periods of time. Flourishing democracies can and have broken down into political chaos and then despotism virtually overnight;

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and, by the same token, democratic institutions have arisen from the ashes of authoritarian regimes, again in a flash. Thus, for contemporary students of politics, the manner in which democratic institutions are built, sustained, changed, and destroyed remains a crucial issue.

Theories of political institutions, for sound reasons, encompass a wide range of forces. Yet every theory of institutional stability and change incorporates public opinion or support in some fashion or another. Theorists from diverse schools of thought agree, in particular, on the importance of the willingness of citizens to support the continued existence of the primary political institutions of a polity. Institutional legitimacy, and ultimately compliance, depend in some degree upon the beliefs held by members of the political system.

Political scientists have considered this problem of institutional support from many different theoretical angles, often working within the framework first sketched in detail by Easton (1965; see also 1975, 1976) and elaborated and empirically embellished by others. "Diffuse support" represents the central concept in this so-called systems theory. In this theoretical portmanteau, diffuse support constitutes a reservoir of institutional goodwill, and is especially useful for the maintenance of an institution when decision makers produce public policies with which many of the populace disagree.

We, too, focus on the problem of diffuse support of democratic institutions and its relationship to stability and change, but within two political and theoretical contexts. First, we focus on diffuse support for the U.S. Supreme Court. The particular dimension of diffuse support we examine here is "institutional commitment"—the willingness to defend the basic structure of the institution against fundamental change, just one of the components of this complex, multidimensional concept (for a similar analysis of legislatures, see Patterson, Hedlund, and Boynton 1975).¹ Second, we direct our attention toward African Americans, one of the most important minorities in national politics. For much of the two hundred years of the Republic, race and judicial politics have gone hand in hand. Race as an issue has figured in several recent crises of stability in American institutions, and the Court has had a hand in two of these episodes (e.g., Dahl 1957; Adamany 1973). For an extended period of time in the twentieth century, the Supreme Court played a special role in American politics in defining and realizing the rights of blacks, so the nature of and changes in their attitudes toward the institution loom especially important in any attempt to understand the popular basis of

¹Commitment to an institution is not, of course, the same thing as either compliance or legitimation. There is, as Adamany (1973) and others remark, not a great deal of evidence for the capacity of the Supreme Court to legitimize the decisions of other institutions, but see Gibson (1989) and Tyler (1990). Ultimately, commitment to the Supreme Court may hold implications for compliance and legitimation of controversial policies, but here we focus on support for the maintenance of the institution.
the Court. And, by understanding how diffuse support for the Court operates within the black community, we can gain a better theoretical understanding of the more general processes at work in the formation, maintenance, and deterioration of diffuse support of political institutions.

We spotlight the attitudes of blacks. Yet we can only deepen and enhance our understanding of black views toward the Court by a comparison of support between blacks and whites. In an earlier venture, we offered a fully specified model of diffuse support for the Court among a sample of whites and others (see Caldeira and Gibson 1992). Here we will take advantage of that previous work to adduce summary comparisons wherever appropriate and useful.

We think it important to probe the attitudes of blacks because this minority is a significant and strategically located component of American political life and because social scientists have so rarely analyzed and understood this segment of the population. We need no better rationales. But this sort of study is important for a more theoretical reason. By studying blacks, we hope to gain additional purchase on the ways in which shifts in favorable and unfavorable policy outputs affect basic commitments to political institutions and processes. The course of the Supreme Court’s policies on racial discrimination and other issues of particular interest to blacks has changed significantly over the last few decades, and we have some limited but tantalizing evidence of a concomitant change in blacks’ views toward the institution. Accordingly, we will explore in some detail ways in which satisfaction with public policy affects basic political attitudes. In other words, does the support of blacks track the ebb and flow of the Supreme Court’s policies?

Our analysis is organized as follows. First, we briefly recount the roles of the Supreme Court in defining the rights and opportunities of blacks, paying particular attention to the manner in which the decisions of the Court have been associated with diffuse support in the black community in the recent past. We then present our basic conceptual and operational frameworks for the analysis of diffuse support. Following a brief descriptive section, in which we describe black attitudes and compare them to those of whites, we turn our attention toward testing several hypotheses about the etiology of diffuse support for the Supreme Court within the black community. Throughout our analysis, as we mentioned earlier, we make comparisons where appropriate to our findings on the origins of white opinion. We conclude with a discussion of change in black attitudes toward the Court and speculate about the implications of the possibility of having a Supreme Court hostile to black political interests for the next decade or more.

THE SUPREME COURT AND BLACK RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Perhaps more than any other national political institution in recent decades, the Supreme Court has protected the interests of black Americans.
From the early days of the Warren Court onward through the beginning of the 1960s, the Court stood as a beacon of hope and light for black Americans amidst an otherwise hostile political system. Senior southern chairmen in both houses of Congress, buttressed by the institution of the “filibuster” in the Senate and the Rules Committee in the House, bottled up attempts to legislate against lynching, intimidation at the polls, and all manner of racial discrimination. To be sure, chief executives from Franklin Roosevelt through John Kennedy proved more receptive to the political cause of blacks than did Congress, but not until Lyndon Johnson did the executive branch invest the full force of its authority in favor of black civil rights.

Even prior to the 1930s, the Court from time to time struck blows for racial equality. The Court’s decisions on the issue of race prior to the 1940s hardly seem revolutionary in the light of history and the justices showed considerable inconsistency, but the black community saw sufficient promise to place heavy weight on the judiciary in the struggle for freedom and equality. Thus, for example, the NAACP mobilized in an impressive way to help to defeat Judge John J. Parker’s nomination to the Supreme Court in 1930. The leader in this battle, Walter White, saw Parker as a threat to the gains blacks had made in the past and hoped to see in the future in the Supreme Court (see, e.g., Hine 1977; Watson 1963). Older black Americans have witnessed great changes in the degree to which the Supreme Court has shown sympathy to their interests.

The NAACP Legal Defense Fund’s well-documented, systematic, and relatively successful use of the federal courts to achieve greater racial equality in a number of areas of the law is a classic example of how the Court was drawn in and assumed an instrumental role in the lives of blacks (see Vose 1959 and Tushnet 1987). During the 1950s and 1960s, the apogee of “Warren Court liberalism,” the Supreme Court with the help of a number of interest groups steadfastly vindicated and expanded the rights of blacks. Shapiro (1979) has put the matter well in describing blacks—along with organized labor, government workers, and poor people—as the chief constituencies of the Warren Court. From the 1920s through the late 1960s, the Supreme Court became increasingly supportive of the rights and liberties of blacks, and in the 1950s and 1960s this movement accelerated. Especially following World War II through the close of the 1960s, then, black Americans had good reason to hold the Supreme Court in high esteem.

Black Americans in the last two decades have not found the Supreme Court the loyal and constant ally of the past. Indeed, as an empirical matter, the claims of blacks have met with much less success and received less sympathy from the Burger Court (see, for examples, Ulmer and Thompson 1981; Baum 1987, 1988; Blasi 1983). From the early 1970s through the present, blacks and other constituents of the Warren Court have increasingly turned—often in desperation—for vindication of rights and liberties to the Congress and, in some areas, to the state courts. In the late Burger Court
and during the first years of the Rehnquist Court, the justices have shown less and less sympathy for the policy agenda of the black community, instead cultivating constituencies among state, local, and federal governments, businesses of varying sizes, and social conservatives. Accordingly, litigators for African Americans can point to few victories in the Supreme Court in recent years. To be sure, we can identify some expansions of the rights of blacks during the Burger Court era in a few selected policy areas, but, whatever view one might take of the whole picture, it is clear that the black community could no longer take the Court for granted as a friend (for a brief review of shifts in policy see Shapiro 1990, 62–64). Thus, if blacks saw the Court in a particularly positive light during the Warren Era as a result of its aid and comfort in the struggle for civil rights, today they surely have little or no reasons to hold the Court in the high esteem of yesteryear.

What, if any, implications do these basic changes in policy have for black attitudes toward the Supreme Court? To assess this question, we must initially turn to prior research on black support for the Court.

**Blacks' Views of the Supreme Court**

Theoretical as well as descriptive concerns have animated research on black attitudes toward the Supreme Court. No one doubts the importance, for descriptive purposes, of differences between the white majority and the most important minority in the United States in attitudes toward the basic structure and legitimacy of the regime. Even more significantly, since blacks have been the object—both as beneficiaries and as losers—of many landmark decisions of the Supreme Court over the course of American history, scholars have naturally directed their investigations at the views of black Americans. The implicit working assumption of this research: surely we can learn something of theoretical significance by studying the levels of diffuse support among those who are quite directly affected by the Court's decisions.

Early research on black-white differences in support for the Supreme Court pictured blacks as substantially more supportive of the institution than whites. For instance, Hirsch and Donohew (1968)—based on data collected in 1964, the heyday of the Court's activism on racial issues—reported that not only were black attitudes toward the Court extremely favorable, but that twice as many blacks were favorable than were whites. This research assumed a connection between policy and support; support for the Court in this view flowed from favorable judicial decisions.

We can use earlier research to trace in a rough-and-ready fashion changes in black attitudes toward the Court. According to the measures employed at

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2It is always difficult to evaluate research on black and white differences for several methodological reasons. First, the number of black respondents is typically small, and the pooling of
the time, blacks were considerably more supportive of the Court (or at least its policy outputs) than were whites during the 1960s (Hirsch and Donohew 1968; see also Murphy, Tanenhaus, and Kastner 1973). By the 1970s, however, racial differences in attitudes had shrunk considerably (Handberg and Maddox 1982; Sigelman 1979; Glenn 1974–1975). This change in views in the black community most likely reflected changing evaluations of the Court’s decisions, rather than change in fundamental commitments to the institution. By the end of the 1970s, black-white differences had largely disappeared. On at least one dimension of support—confidence in the Court—blacks manifested an orientation toward that institution just as unfavorable as whites (Sigelman 1979). Sigelman interpreted this finding as an indication of a “bottoming out” of the attitudes of both blacks and whites in the wake of the so-called Watergate crisis. Unfortunately, problems in both the measurement of diffuse support and the small numbers of blacks included in the samples make us wary of placing too much confidence in these findings.

In general, there is some evidence that black political attitudes are more reality-based than are white attitudes. For instance, black trust in government seems to be closely connected to satisfaction with incumbents and particularly with the election of black political leaders (Howell and Fagan 1988; Abney and Hutcheson 1981; Bobo and Gilliam 1990). The evidence is fragmentary, but it seems that the reservoir of good will toward the political system is shallower among blacks than among whites.

Thus, two major hypotheses emerge from this earlier, largely descriptive literature. The first envisions diffuse support among blacks as a reflection of levels of specific support. That is, to the extent that unfavorable policy decisions are forthcoming, blacks will not extend support for the Supreme Court. Consequently, we may find a diminished utility in distinguishing between diffuse and specific support among blacks.

To the extent that black attitudes toward the Court reflect the degree of favorable judicial policies, we would predict a less positive orientation toward the Court among blacks than whites, than they were in the past. Indeed, it would not be too much of a caricature to argue that most of the Court’s decisions of the 1960s on balance favored blacks, that they were more mixed in the 1970s, and that in the 1980s blacks have been decidedly

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3We might also suggest a third hypothesis: the findings in the research might differ because they used quite different measures of support for the Supreme Court. Because the measurement approaches differed so considerably, our extraction of hypotheses from this literature must be treated as highly tentative.
disadvantaged by the course of judicial policy, at least in relative terms. If diffuse support among blacks is a function of the nature of policy outputs, then we would expect to find blacks today less favorably oriented toward the Court than are whites. Of course, we have in our possession only cross-sectional evidence, so we have to remain guarded in what we say about these dynamic propositions.

Second, black attitudes toward the Court may be closely related to the degree to which individuals have experienced a Supreme Court favorably disposed to the interests of their community. Young black Americans have never lived in a period during which the Supreme Court has acted in a uniformly sympathetic fashion toward black political and social interests. Accordingly, if this interpretation based on cohorts holds water, we expect to find considerable generational differences in diffuse support associated with these changes in the Court's policy over the last several decades.

To test these hypotheses, we must give careful attention to the measurement and conceptualization of attitudes toward the high bench. We now turn to this important task.

**Conceptualizing Support**

Following in the footsteps of others, we distinguish between diffuse and specific support for the Supreme Court. Diffuse support consists of a "reservoir of favorable attitudes or good will that helps members to accept or tolerate outputs to which they are opposed or the effects of which they see as damaging to their wants" (Easton 1965, 273; see also Murphy and Tanenhaus 1990, 991, 994). In the context of political institutions, diffuse support is equivalent to legitimacy, which includes "commitment" to an institution. Easton defines this commitment as "a willingness to maintain and defend the structures or norms of a regime even if they produce unfavorable consequences" (Easton 1975, 451). Others have defined diffuse support for political institutions in a similar fashion (e.g., Dennis 1966; Boynton, Patterson, and Hedlund 1968; Patterson, Hedlund, and Boynton 1975; Boynton and Loewenberg 1973; and Wahlke 1971).

We define "specific support" quite simply as satisfaction with the performance of a political institution (cf. Easton 1965, 1975; Muller 1970). This satisfaction may revolve around particular policies or actions or may be of a more generalized and unfocused sort. Specific support is primarily distinguishable from diffuse support by its durability. Satisfaction may wax and wane depending upon the outputs of the institution, but diffuse support

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4Again following Easton, we distinguish between diffuse support and compliance as related but conceptually independent constructs. Diffuse support is only one of several factors that may influence compliance within specific circumstances. For a more complete treatment of this problem see Gibson 1989.
changes only very slowly. It is useful, as well as commonplace, to distinguish between elemental and inveterate commitments to institutional structures and the ephemeral and transitory evaluations of institutional performance.

How, if at all, are diffuse and specific support related? The response to this question has two components—a theoretical answer and an empirical answer. Theoretically and conceptually, the two forms of support should not bear a close relationship to one another. To conceive of the former as a simple function of the latter would undermine much of the utility of distinguishing institutional commitments from satisfaction with outputs. The stability of political institutions would then simply turn on their performance in the short run. In a theoretical sense, then, diffuse support must be disconnected from specific support to at least some degree.

The empirical literature does not give us a clear-cut answer. Indeed, we encounter in these reports virtually every possible level of correlation. Of most immediate relevance here, earlier work on support for the Supreme Court (e.g., Murphy, Tanenhaus, and Kastner 1973; Murphy and Tanenhaus 1968, 1990; Tanenhaus and Murphy 1981) has shown a fairly strong relationship between specific and diffuse support. This relationship might well reflect measurement error (see Easton 1975, 442, footnote 21)—or perhaps something peculiar about attitudes toward the Supreme Court—but we simply do not know at this point.

Thus, we conceptualize diffuse and specific support as independent concepts, but leave open our expectations about the degree of correlation between the two types of support.

**Operationalizing Support**

Our first operational concern revolves around the measurement of institutional commitments to the Supreme Court. Institutional commitments range from complete unwillingness to support the continuing existence of the institution to an unswerving institutional allegiance. To capture the enduring and basic components of public evaluations of the Court, we have formulated tough questions about the willingness to accept, make, or contemnence major changes in fundamental attributes of how the high bench functions or fits into the American constitutional system (cf. Boynton and Loewenberg 1973; Patterson, Hedlund, and Boynton 1975; Caldeira and Gibson 1992). These include items on the abolition of judicial review of federal law and of the Court itself, reducing the powers of the justices, plucking controversial issues from the purview of the Court, and willingness to engage in active opposition to threats to the institution. The choices we offered the respondents represent a good deal more than mere tinkering with minor

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5Indeed, some scholars despair of the possibility of disentangling the concepts empirically—e.g., Davidson and Parker 1972; Loewenberg 1971.
procedural aspects of the Court; instead, they suggest changes so substantial as to undermine the institution as it currently exists. Unwillingness to countenance fundamental changes in the Court is a part of the classical definition of diffuse support as a commitment to the legitimacy of a political institution. Thus, we calibrate our scale of diffuse support for the Supreme Court with points indicating willingness to accept integral structural changes in the institution.\textsuperscript{6}

We collected the respondents's answers to our questions via a five-point Likert scale in a national in-person, two-wave panel survey conducted in 1987. A special "over-sample" of blacks was used in the survey. Additional details of the survey's design may be found in appendix A. The collapsed responses of both black and white Americans to our five items appear in table 1.

Two aspects of table 1 stand out sharply. First, blacks, like whites, are in the main favorably oriented toward the Supreme Court as an institution. For instance, a majority of both blacks and whites would not support the abolition of judicial review of congressional action. Of those willing to express a view (i.e., of those who are not uncertain), substantial majorities indicate support of the Court. There is obviously a fair amount of variability in the views of both whites and blacks. Yet we should understand this variability within the general context of positive orientations toward the high bench.

Second, on every single item blacks show less support for the Court than do whites, and in every instance the difference is highly statistically significant. This pattern results in part because blacks are more likely than whites to profess uncertainty toward the Court.\textsuperscript{7} Nonetheless, even discounting that, we find blacks less supportive of the institution.

This result stands in stark contrast to the findings reported in earlier work—in those studies, blacks showed either greater support for the Court than did whites, or at the very least, in recent years, no difference. Even if

\textsuperscript{6}One commentator described these items, collectively, as drastic enough to draw even the Court's worst enemies to defend the institution. We would put it differently. These threats to the Court, which threaten the integrity of it as a political institution, might well oblige some of those most aggrieved by the Court's policies to take up the cudgels for the justices. That, of course, is the line we wish to delineate between the concepts of diffuse and specific support. The defection of some moderates and liberals from Roosevelt's political coalition in response to the "Court-packing" plan of 1937 provides a good illustration of enemies on judicial policy coming to the aid and comfort of the Court as an institution. For further discussion, see Caldeira and Gibson, 1992.

\textsuperscript{7}It is certainly true that some of the difference between blacks and whites is a function of a greater tendency for blacks to be uncertain or not to have an opinion on these issues. Nevertheless, when we exclude these respondents from the analysis, the racial difference on three of the five items is still significant beyond .001, the difference on one item is significant at .01, and one difference is not significant. For instance, of those with opinions, 24% of the black sample would like to reduce the powers of the Supreme Court; only 12% of the white sample is so inclined.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Attitudes toward the Supreme Court</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent Supportive</td>
<td>Percent Uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The power of the Supreme Court to declare acts of Congress unconstitutional should be eliminated.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the Supreme Court continually makes decisions that the people disagree with, it might be better to do away with the Court altogether.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would not make much difference to me if the U.S. Constitution were rewritten so as to reduce the powers of the Supreme Court.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The right of the Supreme Court to decide certain types of controversial issues should be limited by the Congress.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should be willing to do everything they can to make sure that any proposal to abolish the Supreme Court is defeated.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The minimum (unweighted) number of whites is 794; the minimum for blacks is 435.

*Loadings come from the first factor from the unrotated solution of a common factor analysis. Because the subsequent factors all had trivial eigenvalues, we performed no rotation. The correlations between the items and the factor scores are .84, .74, .73, .71, and .51, respectively.

*Racial difference is significant at .001 or less.
we take into account differences in measurement in earlier studies, we think it likely that our results represent an important shift downward in the level of support for the Court among blacks relative to whites.

We have used factor analysis to create a summary measure of diffuse support. \(^8\) Table 1 shows the factor loadings from a common factor analysis of the five items. The factor structure is strongly unidimensional; the first factor accounts for 52% of the variance in the items. The first unrotated factor score from this analysis will serve as a summary measure of diffuse support for the Court.

Racial differences on this index are, as expected, substantial. For instance, if we use a trichotomized version of the scale, 26% of the whites is low in diffuse support for the Court, but the figure for blacks is 46%. The differences are less substantial at the high end of our measure of diffuse support but, in general, blacks are significantly and considerably less supportive of the Court than are whites.

The Relationship of Diffuse and Specific Support

Extant literature suggests that black attitudes toward the Court are strongly driven by the favorability of the policy outputs of the Court toward black political and social interests. When the Court finds in favor of blacks' claims, it receives support; when its decisions go against the interests of blacks, support declines. Earlier research thus leads us to expect a close connection between specific and diffuse support among black Americans.

Specific support is the evaluations citizens hold of the current policy outputs of the institution. We measured specific support by asking the respondents whether the Supreme Court is "too liberal or too conservative or about right in its decisions?" Roughly 54% of our black respondents judge the Supreme Court as "about right." Among those dissatisfied with Court outputs, there is more than a two to one balance in favor of the view that the Court has been too conservative. Thus, a bare majority of blacks gives specific support to the Court.

This question as asked is not a measure of specific support. Instead, we must transform it into a dichotomous variable indicating satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the Court. Specific support refers to whether the subject is satisfied or dissatisfied with the outputs of the institution, not whether the respondent views the policy as too liberal or too conservative. \(^9\)

\(^8\)For two reasons, we have not conducted the factor analysis separately for blacks and whites. First, to do so would result in index scores for blacks and whites that are not comparable. Second, we are willing to assume that the structure of beliefs does not differ between blacks and whites, even if levels of support do differ. For those unpersuaded by these theoretical arguments, we note that when we factor analyze the responses of blacks and whites separately, the two sets of factor loadings are very similar.

\(^9\)Scholars have operationalized specific support in a number of different manners. Thus, for example, Murphy, Tanenhaus, and Kastner (1973) create a summated scale derived from
TABLE 2
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIFFUSE AND SPECIFIC SUPPORT,
BLACK MASS PUBLIC, 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diffuse Support</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Specific Support</th>
<th>Too Liberal</th>
<th>Too Conservative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>(191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(46)</td>
<td>(118)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this perspective, we find little relationship between diffuse and specific support—table 2 reports the relationship between specific support and the trichotomized version of the diffuse support scale. Among blacks, the relationship between diffuse and specific support is not strong, and if anything, there is a slight tendency for those who express dissatisfaction with the Court's current outputs to show higher levels of diffuse support. For instance, among those who think the Court has been too conservative, 35% express high levels of diffuse support; among those who view the institution as too liberal only 9% express high support (16% of those satisfied with the Court are high in diffuse support). This no doubt reflects the submerged impact of ideology in our measure of specific support. Dissatisfaction does not in and of itself predict levels of diffuse support. This is comforting from the point of view of measurement.

If—as the earlier literature seems to suggest—blacks condition diffuse support on the satisfaction of specific demands, then we should find the lowest levels of support among those who see the Court as too conservative. Yet we see in table 2 a fairly curious relationship. Those who think the Court has become too conservative exhibit the most support for the institution; those who think the Court as too liberal indicate the least support. Paradoxically,
those who characterize the Court as too liberal accord higher levels of support than do blacks who claim satisfaction with the Court. This demonstrates well the disjunction between specific and diffuse support, and also shows that dissatisfaction with the policy outputs of the institution does not necessarily translate directly into low levels of diffuse support.

How can we account for this anomalous finding? Those who see the Court as too conservative are probably a diverse group. For some, the conservatism of the Court’s current policy, relative to the trend of decisions in previous decades, may have turned into declining levels of institutional support. For others, however, it seems that institutional commitments have not wavered even in the light of unfavorable policy decisions by the Court. Perhaps the liberalism of earlier courts has generated a level of institutional commitment among a subset of blacks that is not so easily eroded—just as one of our chief theoretical propositions predicts—and what we are observing here is the resilience of diffuse support. Because this issue is so important, it is useful to consider more fully the relationship between policy views and support for the Court.

IDEOLOGY AND DIFFUSE SUPPORT

Is some significant portion of the variability in diffuse support for the Court a function of ideological and policy commitments? We hypothesize, in light of the data shown in table 2, that liberals are more supportive of the Court than are conservatives. The data in table 3 address this hypothesis.\(^{10}\) There we present a multiple regression of diffuse support on indicators of a variety of policy issues—some of direct relevance to the courts and others of a more general sort. In the former category, we include capital punishment, leniency in the criminal courts, racial segregation in housing, abortion, and pornography; and in the latter, gun control and legalization of marijuana.\(^ {11}\) (For the precise wording of these items, see appendix B.) We report, from left to right, simple correlations, standardized regression coefficients (beta), and levels of significance.

\(^{10}\) Many assume a substantial difference between blacks and whites in support for liberal values. This assumption stems from the overwhelming support blacks give to the Democratic party in nearly all elections. Yet there is some evidence available to suggest a contrary conclusion. For instance, Secret, Johnson, and Welch (1988) have shown that blacks are more likely to support allowing prayer in public schools. This conclusion is based on both bivariate and multivariate analysis, and is attributable to a greater conservatism on traditional sorts of political values. See also Seltzer and Smith (1985).

\(^{11}\) These items, as we suggest in the text, bear only imperfectly on the substance of the Court’s recent decisions. Thus, for example, the Court handed down important decisions on capital punishment, abortion, and criminal procedure, but it has moved from left to right on the issues over the last decade and a half. It has said nothing about gun control and the legalization of marijuana. Nevertheless, our respondents’ attitudes on these issues do reflect more general conservative, liberal, or moderate political preferences.
TABLE 3

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIFFUSE SUPPORT AND POLICY OPINIONS, BLACK MASS PUBLIC, 1987*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion Regarding</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>Diffuse Support Beta</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital Punishment</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Control</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leniency in Criminal Courts</td>
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<td>-.03</td>
<td>.62</td>
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<td>Legalization of Marijuana</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.22</td>
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<td>Residential Racial Segregation</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abortion</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pornography</td>
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<td>-.07</td>
<td>.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideological Self-Identification</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan Identification</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.86</td>
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</table>

*Minimum pairwise N = 352. R = .26, R² = .09, adjusted R² = .04.

There is remarkably little connection between a variety of ideological and policy views and diffuse support among African Americans. Neither the more unfocused ideological and party identifications nor the more specific policy views shape attitudes toward the Supreme Court as an institution. With one exception, the correlations are remarkable only insofar as they are uniformly weak.

We see one important exception: those who favor stronger prohibitions against residential racial segregation tend to exhibit more support for the Court than those who do not. This suggests a hint of a policy basis to attitudes toward the Court, and we are not surprised that the policy issue is racial segregation. Those who strongly oppose the right of whites to segregate their neighborhoods are today more supportive of the Supreme Court, even if the relationship is not very strong and even if there is not a great deal of variability on this issue within the black community.

These weak correlations represent additional evidence that policy dissatisfaction has not translated into weakened institutional commitments among black Americans. Unfortunately, our cross-sectional data do not allow us to address directly the issue of change in attitudes toward the Court. So we have to tread carefully in addressing the question of dynamics among blacks. It is nonetheless useful to examine this issue a bit further.

Black Cohorts and Support for the Supreme Court

Let us assume for the moment that the data we have presented thus far are indicative of a pattern of evolution in blacks' views of the Court. Perhaps what we see here is precisely what Easton and others would predict: as
specific support declines over time, there is an associated gradual erosion of diffuse support. In essence, diffuse support can decay over time if it does not receive at least minimal sustenance from policy outputs viewed in a positive light. These attitudes decay at different rates for different individuals, and are of course affected more by the perceptions of institutional outputs than by actual policy decisions, but we should nonetheless be able to observe evidence of this effect if this theoretical prediction holds true.

Perhaps the findings we observe here are a function of what we might call a "Warren Court generation" created by a decade and a half of judicial decisions favorable to the interests of black people. It is quite possible that some portion of the remaining reservoir of diffuse support among blacks represents a "hangover" from the earlier strong institutional regard generated during the heyday of the liberal Warren Court. After a sustained period during which the high bench stood in the forefront of the civil rights movement, and after white Americans themselves had made the Supreme Court such a vivid symbol of the movement toward greater racial integration, we might find only a gradual erosion of fundamental support among blacks as the Court changed its policy orientations and adopted a more conservative stance. This scenario would explain the decoupling of ideology, policy attitudes, specific support, and diffuse support within the minds of contemporary black Americans.

We can conduct a weak test of this hypothesis through an analysis of black cohorts. We have divided our subjects into three categories. The first consists of those who largely came of political age after the Warren Court revolution. We identify this group as those who were born after 1953. By the time these people had reached their fifteenth birthday, the Supreme Court had begun its rightward move. For nearly all of the adult lives of these subjects, the Supreme Court has not found in favor of blacks' interests as consistently

Scholars differ on the persistence throughout the life-cycle of political orientations learned in adolescence or early adulthood. Some make claims for substantial continuity, for the primacy of attitudes learned early in life; others argue for minimal persistence except for the most fundamental orientations. The truth seems to lie somewhere between the two extremes. Kinder and Sears' authoritative review of the literature puts it well:

Adults steadily resist any systematic pressure to change their longstanding predispositions. . . . Any major resocialization, even in early adulthood, apparently demands an exacting and unusually powerful social situation. . . . In its simplest form, then, the persistence view overstates the case. More plausible is a view that takes into account continuing socialization and occasional resocialization through adolescence and diminishing but still noticeable levels of change thereafter (1985, 724).

No doubt others will think of other points at which to divide the three cohorts, and some might prefer different numbers of cohorts. We think the divisions we have specified make good substantive sense, and on practical grounds we could not afford to break the sample into more subsets. The results reported in succeeding tables seem solid. Our experiments with alternative cohorts did not indicate any particular sensitivity to the break points.
as had the Warren Court.\textsuperscript{14} Although we recognize that affective orientations toward political institutions are instilled at a quite early age (see Easton 1965, for example), we also believe that these beliefs can be extinguished relatively early in life if they are not reinforced.\textsuperscript{15}

The second category of citizens includes those who most strongly and directly experienced the Warren Court's rulings. This group we define as those who were born between 1933 and 1953. These are the individuals most likely to have directly experienced the desegregation brought about by the Court. Moreover, their political views hardened during the period in which the U.S. Supreme Court was the most, if not only, responsive institution to black political and social interests. It is this group that we most strongly suspect developed stalwart and nearly immutable attitudes toward the Court. Even after a fairly lengthy period of conservative rulings by the Court, we expect that this group will exhibit the highest levels of diffuse support for the institution.

The final category encompasses those who have experienced supreme courts of greatly varying hues. These old black Americans were born prior to 1933 and lived through periods in which the Supreme Court was sometimes—but more often not—responsive to black interests. Indeed, during the period of the bulk of this cohort's greatest receptivity to political learning, the Court's policy on race was relatively conservative, and for this reason we hypothesize that these subjects are the least likely of our three cohorts to express diffuse support for the Court. The data relevant to this hypothesis are shown in Table 4.

The hypothesis is fairly strongly supported by the data. The "Warren Court" cohort exhibits an unusually high level of support for the Supreme Court. Slightly more than a quarter of the middle cohort exhibited a high level of diffuse support; a significantly smaller proportion of the other cohorts show up in the category of highest esteem for the Court. The top row of the table makes the difference even clearer. For instance, only one third of this group is low in diffuse support, compared to 59% for the older cohort and 48% for the younger cohort. This is a substantial difference. Those who were most clearly and directly influenced by the Supreme Court during their early adult years are the most supportive of the institution. The

\textsuperscript{14}The Court's rightward shift did not occur in one fell swoop after the retirement of Earl Warren and installation of Warren Burger in 1969, Harry Blackmun in 1970, and Lewis Powell and William Rehnquist in 1971. It happened gradually. Nevertheless, the various media, political elites, and the black community spoke of these changes in personnel as though they marked sharp, significant shifts in judicial policy. For our purposes, perceptions among black leaders and the black community are more important than subtle interpretations of doctrinal change.

\textsuperscript{15}Evidence on the onset of affective attachments to the Supreme Court among young Americans is in scant supply and of problematic quality. Still, the two main studies (Easton and Dennis 1969; Caldeira 1977) seem united on one point: young people develop knowledge of and feelings toward the Court at a much later age than for the president.
disjunction between this generation and our youngest cohort of blacks is particularly striking.

How much weight should we place on these results and our interpretation of them? Without further investigation, we cannot discount the threat of spuriousness in these findings. Perhaps our age cohorts differ on other attributes which themselves predict diffuse support for the Court. For example, attentiveness is one of the best predictors of support (see Caldeira and Gibson 1992); those who are more attentive to the business of the Supreme Court are much more likely to be high on our measure of diffuse support ($r = -0.23; \gamma = -0.32$). If attentiveness does account for the pattern in table 4 in its entirety, we would expect no differences in support across the three cohorts. Since those who currently pay close attention to the Supreme Court are most likely to have enough current information to modify the influence of past experiences with the institution, we anticipate smaller differences across generations even if the effect from cohorts persists. We can consider whether there is still a cohort effect even when we confine the analysis to the most attentive segment of each cohort.

The data still illuminate the distinctiveness of the "Warren Court" cohort. For example, among the attentive segments of each cohort, 42% of the older blacks and 30% of the younger blacks are low in diffuse support. This contrasts with only 12% low in support among the middle group. Thus, there is evidence of the distinctiveness of this cohort even among the most attentive segments of the group. In sum, we find no evidence of a threat to our results from the impact of attentiveness.

Is the pattern we witness for the cohorts of blacks simply a function of more general changes over time among the citizenry? That is, a similar

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16For their national sample, taken in the mid-1960s, Murphy, Tanenhaus, and Kastner (1973, 22–23, 42–43) report a strong relationship between knowledge of the Court and diffuse support. This relationship shows up particularly well for blacks.
pattern might obtain for whites as well as for blacks. In table 5 we present data for comparable cohorts of our sample of whites (see Caldeira and Gibson 1992 for additional analysis of the attitudes of whites). The results in the bottom row of the table look quite different for the whites as compared to the blacks; we find no evidence of a “Warren Court” cohort among whites. We see no significant differences across the cohorts in the highest ranges of diffuse support, and precious little in the middle category. In the top row, the pattern is not as tidy as we would like, but, in general, the results seem to indicate a unique effect from membership in cohorts on diffuse support for the Court only among our sample of African Americans.\(^\text{17}\)

Could this generational difference be spurious? We think not. When we regress diffuse support on two dummy variables for age cohorts only the indicator of the “Warren Court” generation remains statistically significant (beta = .20). This, of course, comports well with the data in the table because it suggests no difference between the older and younger generations. When we add level of education to the equation, the distinctiveness of this middle generation declines a bit, but it is still statistically significant (beta = .13). Even adding attentiveness to the Court to the equation leaves the regression coefficient for this cohort intact. Thus, we conclude that an important generational difference exists among African Americans.

\(^{17}\)Some readers might wonder whether the intercohort differences among blacks reflect broader intercohort differences in attitudes toward the political system as a whole, based on overall support or lack of support for black interests by government during different periods. The data at our disposal do not permit an authoritative test of this hypothesis. Nevertheless, we have taken several different approaches and found no evidence in support of this proposition. Thus, for example, there is no relationship between black support for the Court and trust in the federal government or in local government, and this holds across cohorts. Our analysis of confidence in various national institutions uncovered no evidence for a connection between evaluations of the Court and of other institutions among black Americans.
We can adduce one further bit of evidence relevant to the question of racial differences. Table 6 reports the relationship between specific support and diffuse support, controlling for the race of the respondent. The racial differences are stark: among whites, there is some tendency for dissatisfaction with the Court's policy outputs to translate into diminished levels of support. But, among the blacks, precisely the opposite occurs. Those who are more dissatisfied with recent judicial policies are more supportive of the Court as an institution. This is strong evidence of the resilience of past attitudes toward that institution.

If our understanding of the data in the previous tables is correct, then we should expect to see a variable impact of policy views on levels of support within these three black cohort groups. In the group socialized at the height of the Court's activism in favor of black civil rights, we anticipate a small, perhaps insignificant relationship between diffuse support and policy opinions and political attachments. Positive feelings acquired early in life would screen out the impact of unfavorable decisions. For members of the cohorts during which the Supreme Court produced a more mixed package of policy outputs, the ambivalent feelings toward the institutions should prove less resistant to the pull of specific support. In particular, we predict that diffuse support is independent of policy views among the "Warren Court" cohort, but that it is more closely connected within the other cohorts. Table 7 reports data relevant to this hypothesis.

Policy views of the younger and older cohorts do indeed affect levels of support for the Supreme Court—as the results in table 7 indicate—but the relationship within the "Warren Court" cohort is much weaker than it is for older and younger blacks. Within the middle cohort, black Americans who directly experienced a very pro-black court, there is today virtually no relationship between diffuse support and policy views. Within the other two cohorts, attitudes toward residential racial segregation and general evaluations of the Court's decisions have some impact (although the latter is only statistically significant for the youngest cohort). These data provide rather substantial support for the proposition that the Court of Earl Warren imparted a lasting favorable impression on some blacks in the United States.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diffuse Support</th>
<th>Specific Support</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage with</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Diffuse Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks</td>
<td>27.4 (164)</td>
<td>16.2 (191)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whites</td>
<td>25.2 (290)</td>
<td>31.2 (417)</td>
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</table>
# Table 7

**The Relationship of Policy Views and Diffuse Support by Age Cohorts, Black Mass Public, 1987**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort (Birth Date)</th>
<th>Pre-1933</th>
<th>Cohort (Birth Date)</th>
<th>1933–1953</th>
<th>Post-1953</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Punishment</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.08</td>
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<td>Gun Control</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leniency in Criminal Courts</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legalization of Marijuana</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
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<td>Residential Racial Segregation</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.35*</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.14</td>
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<td>Abortion</td>
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<td>-.17</td>
<td>-.08</td>
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<td>Pornography</td>
<td>.11</td>
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<td>-.06</td>
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<td>Ideological Self-Identification</td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partisan Identification</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Court Outputs</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2$                     | .18      | .06                  | .15      |           |

$R^2$ adjusted            | .05      | -.03                 | .08      |           |

Minimum pairwise $N$     | 73       | 118                  | 128      |           |

*Regression coefficient is significant at .05 or less.

We draw still further support for this proposition from recent research in sociology on generations and collective memories. Schuman and Scott (1989) asked a national sample to report memories of important national or international events of the last 50 years. Generations form, at least in part, in response to important social and political events and changes. The constellation of events and changes known under the rubric of "civil rights" figured prominently in the memories of a significant portion of the national sample of Americans. Better-educated individuals mentioned civil rights more often than did others, and, as we might anticipate, blacks more often than whites. The greater personal relevance of civil rights to blacks naturally left a sharper imprint. Schuman and Scott (1989) report interesting results on the relationship between age and memories of civil rights as an important set of events. For whites in the sample, age made no difference. For blacks in the sample, however, Schuman and Scott report a curvilinear relationship: the oldest and the youngest respondents mention civil rights less frequently than do those in the middle grouping. The segment of the sample of blacks for whom civil rights loomed as most salient more or less coincides with the generation we find galvanized by the Warren Court. Our studies obviously differ in important respects, but our results clearly support the notion of distinctive generations of blacks on the issues of civil rights and the Supreme Court.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Here we have discovered or reaffirmed several important attributes of black opinions toward the U.S. Supreme Court. First, blacks are on balance fairly positive toward the Court, but they are decidedly less positive than whites. Second, at the same time, black attitudes toward the institution are not as negative as one might predict if attitudes were formed primarily by whether one is pleased or displeased with current judicial policies. Third, we can explain a portion of the reason why blacks "over-support" the Court as a residue of positive affect created largely during the era of the Warren Court. Among both younger and older blacks, attitudes toward the institution reflect levels of policy satisfaction. Only this "Warren Court" cohort shows a willingness to defend the Court as an institution even in the face of disagreement with the outputs of the current incumbents. These results strongly suggest the extraordinary resiliency of orientations learned early in the life cycle.

For the Supreme Court, the blacks of the Warren Era remain a relatively solid and faithful constituency in comparison to those from other eras. The Supreme Court, in creating controversial policies, naturally makes many enemies, and this problem draws much attention from journalists, politicians, and scholars. But we seem to forget the other side of controversial choices. The Court often makes firm friends as it hands down a series of tough decisions. The Court, like other political institutions, has a set of constituencies, and, like other institutions, it relies on the support of those constituents against its political opposition. We should not think of constituencies as equally important, loyal, or coherent. Fissures will develop even within the most clearly identifiable and unified constituencies, of which black Americans constitute perhaps the best example. Nor should we consider the political landscape as fixed in stone; the Court's constituencies will change substantially over time as the Court itself and its policy agenda change. Indeed, as diffuse support among blacks erodes over the long haul in response to unfavorable policy outputs, we would anticipate a concomitant increase in support among those constituencies now favored in the Supreme Court's decisions. Here we have investigated some sources of support for the Court among one of its most important constituencies, black Americans, and found that one generation in particular has shown extraordinary loyalty to the institution.

This research points out the need for additional analysis of change in attitudes toward important political institutions. Many ailments afflict theories of political support, but the nature of the longitudinal relationship between specific and diffuse support has always ranked as one of the most debilitating. Long periods of institutional failure no doubt erode support. But we have no idea of how long failures must persist before diffuse support disappears;
scholars have simply not been able to investigate this point. Conversely, as we have suggested here, long periods of satisfaction with institutional outputs seem to generate an enduring set of positive orientations toward political institutions. Unfortunately, our data do not permit us to determine whether this is peculiar to blacks during the era of the Warren Court, or whether it is a more general phenomenon applicable to other political and ethnic minorities. It is certainly a question of considerable importance for future inquiry.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH DESIGN

The analysis reported in this paper is based on a national survey conducted in 1987. The survey was an extension of the 1987 General Social Survey (GSS). The sample for the GSS is a full multistage probability sample of English-speaking adults living in the continental United States. The 1987 GSS was conducted in the spring, with a response rate of approximately 75%.

In June and July, the respondents in the 1987 GSS were resurveyed. Of the 1,466 subjects in the Spring GSS, 1,106 were eligible to be interviewed. (NORC reserved approximately 350 respondents for their possible use in future panel studies. Those subjects were not eligible to be reinterviewed.) This subsample was selected randomly, within gender strata. Because the 1987 GSS cross-section had a relatively large differential nonresponse rate by gender, there is some gender imbalance in the pool of subjects eligible for the second-wave interview. Consequently, stratified random sampling was thought desirable. For the reinterviews, males and females were selected with equal probability. Approximately 87% of these subjects were reinterviewed. Most of these were in-person interviews, although because some subjects had moved since the earlier interview, some small percentage of the reinterviews were conducted by telephone.

The GSS in 1987 also included a special oversample of 353 black respondents (i.e., beyond the 191 blacks in the main GSS sample). This sample was also a full probability sample. Extraordinary efforts had to be mounted in order to draw this supplementary sample: roughly 5,000 households nationwide were sampled and contacted in order to locate the black subjects. The response rate for the black respondents was 79%. All of these subjects were eligible for the reinterview, and reinterviews were successfully completed with nearly 90% of the original subjects. It should be noted that the black oversample also overrepresents females. Because the universe of the black oversample was selected for inclusion in the reinterview project, no
sampling techniques could ameliorate this problem. Thus, interviews were completed with a total of 1,267 respondents, 437 of whom are black. Since the sample is stratified by race, most analyses are conducted on weighted data.

Special thanks are due Tom Smith and Jim Davis, co-principal investigators on the GSS, and the GSS Board of Overseers for their assistance on this project. Dick Rubin at NORC was instrumental in bringing the reinterview survey to its highly successful conclusion.

APPENDIX B: WORDING OF QUESTIONS

The wording of specific questions, other than those we mention in the text, is:

Capital punishment: Do you favor or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder? (1) Favor, (2) oppose.

Leniency in criminal courts: In general, do you think the courts in this area deal too harshly or not harshly enough with criminals? (1) Too harshly, (2) about right (volunteered), (3) not harshly enough.

Legalization of marijuana: Do you think the use of marijuana should be made legal or not? (1) Should, (2) should not.

Residential racial segregation: White people have a right to keep (Negroes/Blacks) out of their neighborhoods if they want to, and (Negroes/Blacks) should respect that right. (1) Agree strongly, (2) agree slightly, (3) disagree slightly, (4) disagree strongly.

Abortion: Please tell me whether or not you think it should be possible for pregnant women to obtain a legal abortion if the woman wants it for any reason? (1) Yes, (2) no.

Pornography: Which of these statements comes closest to your feelings about pornography laws? (1) There should be laws against the distribution of pornography whatever the age, (2) there should be laws against the distribution of pornography to persons under 18, (3) there should be no laws forbidding the distribution of pornography.

Ideological self-identification: We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal—point 1—to extremely conservative—point 7. Where would you place yourself on this scale? (1) Extremely liberal, (2) liberal, (3) slightly liberal, (4) moderate, middle of the road, (5) slightly conservative, (6) conservative, (7) extremely conservative.

Partisan identification: Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what? (0) Strong Demo-
crat, (1) not very strong Democrat, (2) Independent, close to Democrat, (3) Independent (neither, no response), (4) Independent, close to Republican, (5) not very strong Republican, (6) strong Republican.

The wording of these questions comes from James A. Davis and Tom W. Smith, *General Social Surveys* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Corporation, 1987).

**REFERENCES**


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