Reflections on a Formal Treatment of Power
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I

My main task in this paper is to introduce a discussion of Blalock's ideas in
Towards a Theory of Minority-Group Relations. But, since the next meeting will be
the last specifically directed at the analysis of power, I think it would be a good
idea to make a few general remarks first, in the hope that we can at some point compare
our reactions to what has happened in the previous meetings. Why is it (to put a
purely personal view) that, though we have had three good papers and interesting
discussions, we don't seem to have got ourselves a neatly tied-up package labelled
"power" to take away with us? It is easy enough to say "Well, why should you expect
to?" but why on earth shouldn't we? The answer to this is not entirely obvious, at
least to me, but I offer the following suggestions, in summary form:

(1) the area of social phenomena covered by "power" is enormous. A first-shot
characterization might be that it is the area of people (or groups) getting what they
want. A well-known restriction added by Weber is that it should be "over the opposition
of others". But (a) there may be no overt opposition among those who are opposed (in
attitude) to the action either because of a fear of sanctions or because the expected
value of successful opposition in smaller than the cost for each individual concerned;
and (b) in any case, the most effective exercise of power is that which enables one
person or group to gain advantages when another person or group who are adversely
affected either do not know that this relationship between benefits for one and losses
for the other exists, or, if they do know this, do not know that the other person or
group is obtaining benefits of this kind. Perhaps, then, the only restriction we
can add is "at the expense of others". But this makes it clear that we do not have
on our hands a neatly demarcated area within politics and sociology but rather a
perspective from which their entire subject-matter may be viewed. (Other perspectives
are also of course possible and valid.)

(2) The conceptual difficulties are, I think, simply reflections of the complexity
of the phenomena. The ways in which one person can get what he wants at the expense
of another are so great that no "definition of power" is likely to help much, and
even going to two (usually labelled "power" and "influence") or four (as with Parsons)
is barely scraping the surface. I feel that more could be done here, but the result
would only be a bigger set of boxes and I don't know if that would be much practical
use.

(3) Questions using the concept of power are often ill-specified over and above
any ambiguities in the concept itself: many general questions about what gives

people power and .so on probably have no answers in that form. ' And even questions
which look "factual" like "What is the distribution of power in Britain today?"
turn out very quickly to involve at the least (again leaving aside any conceptual
problems with "power" itself) judgements about outcomes in various hypothetical
situations and (to decide which hypothetical situations to look at) judgements of
what is "important".

II

Given this prolegomenon, it will not be surprising that my conclusions about
Blalock's work are that it is interesting, worth developing, but not very useful at
present. The general conception with which Blalock operates is that power is a multi-
plicative effect of two factors: resources and mobilization. It is worth noticing
that this essentially the framework which Dahl uses in Who Governs? though he never
seriously discussed the causes of variation in the degree to which resources are
mobilized. (In other words, he has no theory of the costs of action.)*

Presenting the value of some variable as a product of the values of two other
variables is a quite general strategy in the social sciences (including here, very
much, economics). Arthur Stinchcombe, in Constructing Social Theories devotes a
chapter (Chapter 5) to models of precisely this kind, though he does not deal with
power in this way. I should like to begin, therefore, with a few general comments
on this approach.

Obviously anything with a numerical value (or which can be imagined as being
given a numerical value) can be presented with two factors one of which is defined
so as to be reciprocal of the other. Thus we might say that the number of cars on the

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*Compare Oliver E. Williamson "A Rational Theory of the Federal Budgeting Process" in
Gordon Tullock (ed) Papers on Non-Market Decision Making II (Charlottesville, Va. 1967)
p.83.
In this article the President's capital stock of political influence over Congress is
$\bar{K}t$; his effective political stock is $_n Kt$, where $(0 < n < 1)$ is a 'coefficient of effect-
iveness'. This is obviously the "resources x utilization" formula, though it makes
utilization = skill ("It is an index of the President's skills as a politician among
politicians") wheras utilization can include the inclination to use resources.

road in Britain at any time is equivalent to (let us represent this relationship by
the symbol ≡) the product of the total number of cars in Britain and the proportion
of them on the road at that time. Notice that as this stands it is simply a defini-
tional identity. It is not a "theory of car use". It might (or might not) be useful
as an analytical device: thus, if we're discussing car use in 1980 we might divide
our discussion into two parts, factors bearing on ownership and factors bearing on
the intensity of use of each car. This is most useful when the causes of variation
in the two factors are independent. Thus, suppose that ownership is a function of
income but the hours of use per car per week is a function of the size of town in
which the owner of the car lives. Then we could, if we knew the functions, write a
prediction equation (symbolically expressed with an = sign) as follows:
car hours per week = ∅ size and distribution of national income x ∅ distribution of
car owners by size of town. (Obviously both of these functions would need much
specification but the example is so artificial that it is not worth pursuing in
further detail.)

Note that we have now an equation which may or may not be true when it is used
to predict. (It can, obviously, be made to fit any one set of observations, but if the
parameters are estimated from several sets of observations it will probably not exactly
fit any of them.) Whether the equation works, within some margin of error, depends
on the causal importance of the variables used (here income and size of town) relatively
to others since this determines the strength and the stability over time of the rela-
tionship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

In many cases, the two components one of which is the reciprocal of the other
(here car ownership and intensity of car use) will not have independent causes. Rather,
there may be causes of the term on the left hand side in the identity (here total car
use) and one of the terms on the right hand side, the remaining term then falling into
place as a residual. In other words, one might suggest that there are causes of total
car use and causes of car ownership, with use per car being determined by these two.
For example, one might be fairly confident that in 1980 total car hours will be 30%
higher, car ownership will depend on the performance of the economy, and use per
car will be higher or lower than that at present depending on whether the rise in car
ownership is less than or more than 30%. If so, there would clearly be no case for
estimating total car use by multiplying independent estimates for car ownership and
use per car.

The same point can be made with examples from economics. We can write down easily enough the ex-post identity $C \equiv Yp$, where c stands for consumption, Y for income and p for the propensity to consume out of any given level of income. Once again, this is of course only interesting for predictive or explanatory purposes if Y and p are indeed the main causes of c; and, in particular, it is useless if in fact there are determinants of c and of Y, leaving p to adjust so as to bring them into line. (To put it another way, p would then be a mere shadow of Y - except that unlike a shadow for given c the bigger Y got the smaller p would be.) In the Keynesian system, of course, Y is in the short run determined by the level of economic activity (employment), p is a monotomically decreasing function of Y and c is indeed the result of their interaction. (This, incidentally, illustrates a modification that is required to the statement that the causes of the two right-hand terms need to be independent. It does not matter if one term is a function of the other; the important thing is that there should not be something else that brings about the value of the left-hand variable.) To what extent Keynes captured the significant causal features of a modern economy we need not, thankfully, enquire. It is obvious though that if (say) the amount of money has a big independent effect on c, this could be expressed in terms of the Keynesian equation, as "instability in the consumption function". But, especially if "changes in the function " could be predicted by taking other variables, it might be said that "there is no such thing as the consumption function".

The application of all this to power does not need be-labouring. The fact that we can write down the identity "power $\equiv$ resources x mobilization" does not mean that the amount of resources and the degree of mobilization have primary causal efficacy in determining the amount of power exercized (or perhaps more accurately expended). It could be, for example:that the expenditure of power is a function of perceived rewards and costs (subject to the constraint that it cannot be greater than resources, unless resources can be "borrowed"), that the amount of resources is determined some other way, and that 'mobilization' is simply an ex-post accounting term - in other words that just in the sense that there might be "no consumption function" there might be "no mobilization factor".

III

With apologies to Oscar Wilde one might describe Blalock's look as the incom-

prehensible in pursuit of the unverifiable. He gets out of his (or anyone else's) depth almost immediately and stays there. For a supposed expert on methodology he seems extraordinarily poor in defining his variables, recognizing his assumptions and manipulating his data. A full-scale critique would thus be a long, tedious and doubtfully rewarding exercise. I shall concentrate on what seems to me both the core of the book and the most interesting part of it: the discussion of Negro regis- tration in the South 20 years ago.

Blalock's general argument is that the relations between "dominant" and "minority" groups (where, in the peculiar language of race relations, a "minority" group may be a big majority of the relevant population) can take at least two different forms, which he calls "power" and "competition". "Power" can be recognized by the fact that as the proportion increases, the degree of "discrimination" increases at a more than linear rate, whereas the opposite is true for "competition". The derivation of this thesis about power is simple, though Blalock makes it sound fairly complicated, (Blalock pages 150-4). If the dominant group wishes to maintain a constant power-relationship with the minority group as the size of the minority group increases, it must mobilize at a rate which is more than proportional to the increase in the proportion of the minority group. This can easily be seen by noting that for each group $P = R \times M$. If the minority group's resources rise because their numbers increase and the average resources of each of the group's members stays the same (an assumption that Blalock takes for granted, incidentally), the dominant group needs a bigger proportional increase in mobilization of resources if it is to keep the same lead in terms of power (whether the lead is measured in proportional tersm or difference terms) the larger the initial size of the minority group. Thus, if the minority group increases its proportion by 10% from 10% to 20%, the dominant group (whose proportion has obviously declined from 90% to 80%) needs to make a smaller proportional increase in its level of mobilization to stay in the same place than if the minority group increases 80% to 90%, for here the dominant group must raise the same increase in resources expended (=power) while its proportion declines from 20% to 10%.

Blalock suggests that registration data for 997 Southern counties in 1950 pro- duced by Matthews and Prothro fit the "power" model well. The relevant page of data and Blalock's comments are reproduced for convenience.
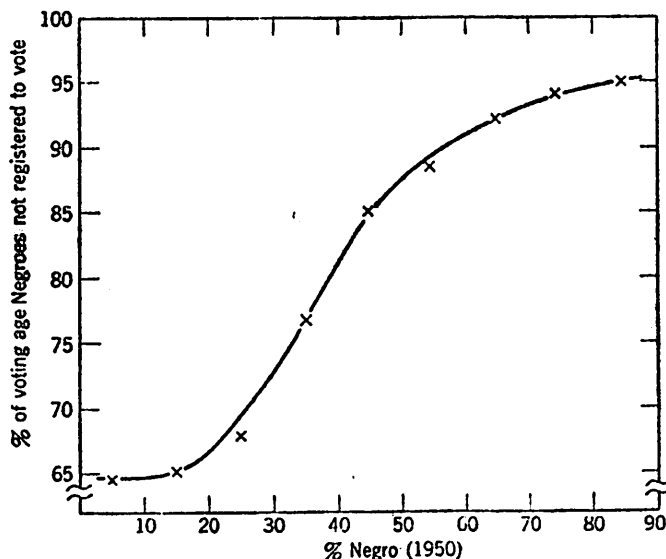
Figure 21

where fear and inexperience prevail. Nevertheless, voter registration data are as satisfactory as any of our other measures of political discrimination.

Matthews and Prothro provide data for 997 Southern counties in which they relate the percentage of Negro registered voters of voting age to per cent Negro in 1950.[20] These data are represented graphically in Figure 21. We note, of course, that the nonlinear pattern involving an increasing slope does not continue indefinitely because of the impossibility of the percentage of nonvoters going above 100. Had the measure of discrimination involved a ratio of white to Negro voter registrations, then the curve would have taken on the predicted form even for counties with extremely high percentages of Negroes. The essential point is the one made by the authors: that at approximately 30 per cent Negro the slope increases sharply and continues to be steep until such a point where Negro registration approaches zero.[21] The authors made no tests of significance for departures from linearity, but in view of the large number of cases involved there can be no doubt that the results are highly significant.

Comparable data for non-Southern counties are lacking in this in-

[20] Matthews and Prothro, *op. cit.*
[21] *Ibid.,* pp. 28–29.

A little elementry manipulation of this information shows how fantastically incorrect almost all of this paragraph is.

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
	% Negro Adults in population	Fraction of Negro adults registered to vote	Registered Negroes as % of all adults (I x II)	% of white adults in population (100 - I)	assumed % of registered whites in pop. ($\frac{3}{4}$ x IV)*	Ratio of white registered voters to Negro voters (V/III)
	5	.35	1.8	95	71.3	40 x
	15	.34	4.1	85	63.8	16 x
	25	.27	6.8	75	56.3	8.3 x
	35	.18	6.3	65	48.8	7.8 x
	45	.12	5.4	55	41.3	7.7 x
	55	.09	5.0	45	33.8	6.8 x
	65	.07	4.6	35	26.3	5.7 x
	75	.06	4.5	25	18.8	4.2 x
	85	.05	4.3	15	11.3	2.6 x

The general pattern of results does not depend on the particular proportion of whites assumed to register, but 75% looks right. Blalock supplies no information. Matthews and Prothro clearly have the data but do not give it in a usable form. However, from the N's of a graph showing the average Negro registration in Southern counties for each decile of white registration, it appears that modal registration is 90+% and median registration 70-79%. I cannot be bothered to calculate the mean. (Negroes and the New Southern Politics, page 132. Incidentally, the data base of the graph is not given. One might expect it to be the same as that for the relation between concentration of Negroes and Negro registration in 1950, but the N's sum to 822 rather than 997.)

A point that may well have occured to a reader is that the proportion of whites registered may rise as the proportion of Negroes increases. But according to Matthews and Prothro there is only a weak relationship (+ .10, see page 132). Thus the "mobilization" of the whites does not occur at this point, at least in response to Negro numbers. There is, however, a correlation of +.24 between Negro/registration. Unfor tunately the details are given the wrong way round to be much use, but in counties where whites are registered to the tune of 90+%, there are about 10% more Negroes (as a proportion of Negroes) registered on average than in other counties (about 40% as against 30%). Conversely, where less than 30% of whites are registered, there are about 5% fewer Negroes registered. Matthews and Prothro do not deal with the relation between proportion Negro and white voting, or Negro voting and white voting. Key, however, asserts that there is a strong relationship between white voting and proportion of Negroes in a county, with the same departure from linearity at high and low Negro levels as we can guess at from the Matthews and Prothro data for registrations. "Almost everywhere the figures suggest that when other conditions are the same the presence of a substantial Negro population brings with it a higher level of white voting (p 516)." "(In Alabama) the highest rates of voting by whites tend to occur in counties with high percentages of Negro population" (p 514). "In South Carolina, for example, the rate of white participation in Democratic primaries does not increase uniformly with the proportion of Negro population, but at the extremes - counties with the lowest and the highest Negro population percentages - marked differences in electoral interest prevail" (p 516). Note for future reference that Key explicitly makes these claims for counties within each state; he denies that it also holds with states as the units.

It will be noticed that the proportion of registered Negroes among all adults
reaches a maximum where Negroes constitute 20-30% of the population (6.8%) and
drops steadily but not dramatically as the proportion of 80-90% it reaches 4.3%.
But if we take Blalock's recommended measure - the ratio of white to Negro voters
registered - it is clear that this ratio falls monotonically and sharply, but not
in a linear fashion.

Ratio
$\dfrac{W}{N}$
registered
(Log scale)
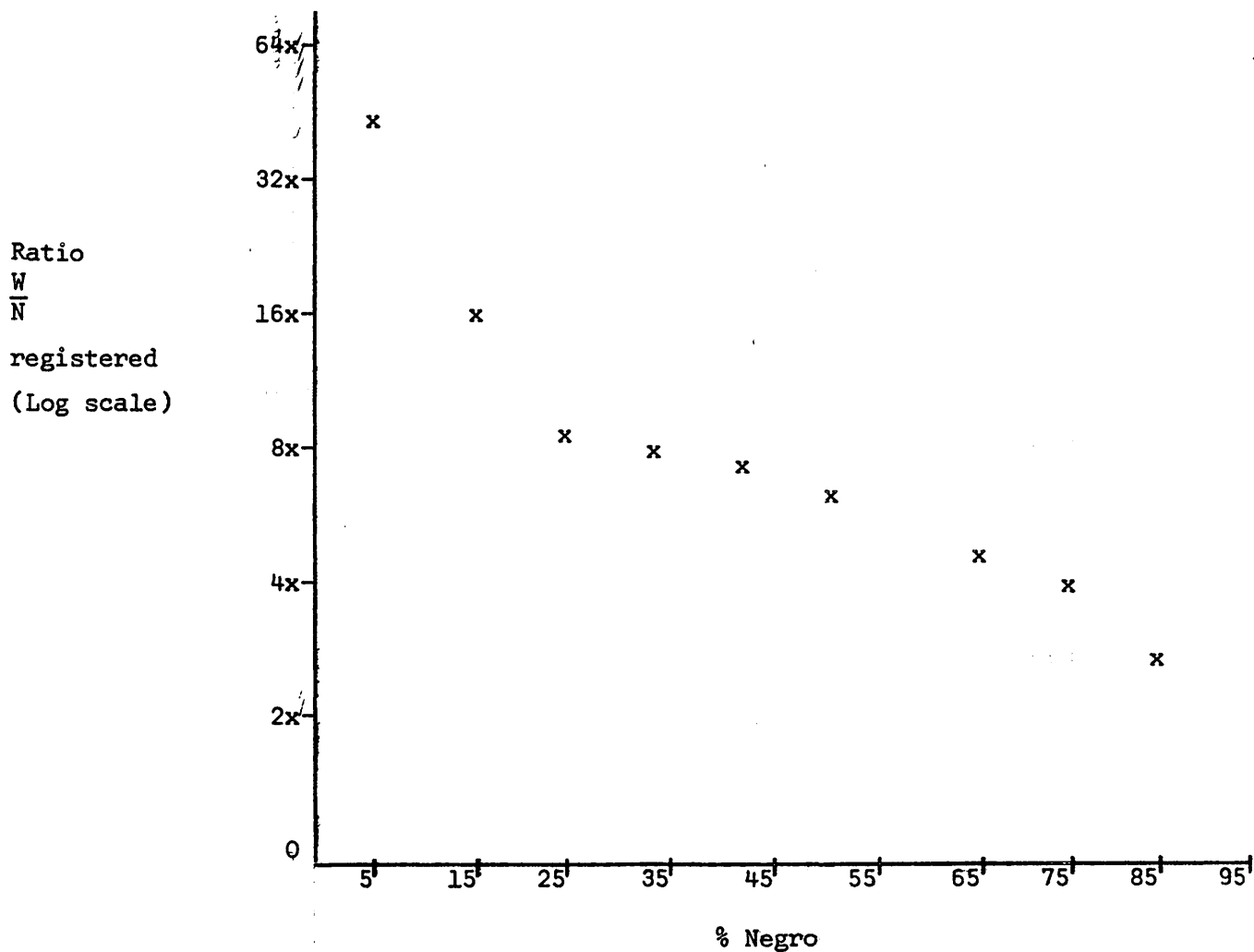
% Negro

It is clear that the whites find it completely impossible (or not worth while, of course) to prevent their relative advantage fall enormously as the proportion Negro rises to 20-30%. They then are able to prevent much further deterioration up to 40-50%, but after this their relative advantage continues to be eroded, with a particularly sharp deterioration as Negroes rise from 70-80% to 80-90%.

We might say on the basis of this that, if "power" reveals itself by invariant relations between the groups as proportions vary, then we do not have an instance of it here, since it is quite clear that the whites do not prevent Negroes from getting increased voting power as their proportion in the population increases.

Does this mean then that we do not here have a situation where the Negroes are perceived as a threat by the dominant whites? Of course we can deduce nothing of the kind. All that Blalock has said is that _if_ the dominant group wishes to maintain a fixed relative advantage, it must work disproportionately harder as its proportion in the population falls off. But there is no reason for supposing that the object is to maintain a fixed superiority, and it is thus absurd to use the maintenance of a constant relationship as the criterion of a "power" situation. The criterion is quite arbitrary and, we may note, is not derived from the discussion of resources and mobilization. On the contrary, if the criterion is satisfied Blalock then says that we can deduce a disproportionately higher level of mobilization in the dominant group the larger the proportion of the minority group in the population. But we know nothing about the relationship between mobilization and outcome. Blalock apparently assumes that there is a linear relationship between power expended (resources x mobilization) and results achieved in lowering the proportion of Negroes registered. This is a pure assumption - it may be that lowering the proportion from .06 to .05 is as difficult as lowering it from .27 to .18.

In any case, the whole approach is absurdly roundabout. In registration (as in employment) the evidence for the existence of a power relationship, i.e. discrimination by the dominant group, is simply that the minority group does less well than one would expect even after taking account of all relevant background variables.

Unfortunately, although Matthews and Prothro obviously have the data on which one could say whether this happens to Negroes in the South, they do not give us the answer. What we need to know to settle the issue of discrimination statistically is

what level of Negro registration would be predicted simply on the strength of
knowledge about those characteristics which have been shown at the individual level
to affect political activity, such as education, occupation and income. This can then
be compared with the observed level of registration and if the latter is below the
former, we can attribute it to the exercise of power by the dominant group. Matthews
and Prothro miss this crucial logical point and compute only an "expected" Negro
registration proportion for each state based on twenty-one (!) variables including
the "structural" variable of the proportion of Negroes in the population. Since the
proportion of Negroes in the population operates by inducing discrimination it is
obviously quite absurd to take it out by putting it into the "prediction". We
cannot therefore get a clearcut answer from Matthews and Prothro, but it looks as if
there must be discrimination in every state of the Confederacy except maybe North
Carolina, Texas, Florida and Tennessee.

For an intelligent job on discrimination which does follow logically correct
procedures, one should look at the chapter in Blau and Duncan's The American
Occupational Structure which shows that, even after allowing for all the disadvantages
of Negroes there is still a residual disadvantage attached to being a Negro in trying
to get a job. If one compares a Negro and a white who are the same on all the variables
(except race) which have been shown to be related to occupation the Negro will still
on average have a worse job - and if he has the same job he will on average be paid
less. This incidentally, suggests that Blalock is wrong in suggesting that the lower
incomes of Negroes in areas where there are more of them in the population is to be
explained merely be worse education etc. ("competition" rather than "power"). In fact
the situation in both cases seems to be the same: if whites had the same individual
low-status characteristics as Negroes, the gap between Negro and white registration
(occupational level) would be lessened but it would by no means disappear.

IV

I said above that there was no reason to suppose that the dominant group would
try to maintain some fixed degree of superiority irrespective of the proportion of
the minority group in the population. The point is in itself so obvious that one
might wonder how anybody could ever have thought otherwise. I regard that as a serious
question, and I think the answer is that if you start where Blalock starts you are
bound to get into a mess. We have to "bring men back in" as Homans put it. We have
to ask what benefits and what costs face each individual member of the dominant group

(including, of course, the very important members holding various political offices)
in deciding whether to act against Negro registration and if so how.

Once we start here we can immediately see how misleading it is to speak of the
dominant group doing this or that as if all its forces could be "mobilized" across the
whole of the South. There are in fact a number of decision-points and at each a
different response is expected. Thus, at the Federal level representatives of the
South fight mainly to prevent intervention in the law and administration of Southern
states and counties. So long as they are successful in this, the state legislatives
then introduce or uphold laws which are either designed to discourage registration
(e.g. poll-tax) or provide a framework within which the administration of registration
can be discrimatory (e.g. literacy tests). The judicial system also of course condones
violence designed to keep Negroes in their place. County or precint officers then
put obstacles in the way of Negroes registering and individuals apply sanctions to any
who try.

The key to all this is control of the state legislature and governorship (Counties
could, if necessary, be abolished.) Thus, the most important threat posed by
Negroes is that they might gain a significant representation, or be pivotal in some
elections, within the state. The more Negroes in a state, the greater cost (in terms
of legislative ingenuity, applying pressure at the local level and incurring odium
in the rest of the country) those whites who feel themselves threatened will be willing
to incur to keep down Negro registration. Data bearing on this point are given below.

| | Negroes registered 1958 | | Negroes in population 1940 | | 1960 | | Voting restrictions | | |
	INVERSE RANK ORDER	%	RANK ORDER	%	RANK ORDER	%	LITERACY TEST	POLL TAX	RANK ORDER OF RESTRICTIONS
MISS.	1	3.4	1	48	1	42	X	X	2=
S.C.	2	12.5	2	42	2	35	X	-	6½=
ALA	3	20.5	3	38	4	30	X	X	2=
VA	4	24.1	7	26	8	21	X	X	2=
ARK	5	27.6	8	25	7	22	-	X	6½=
GA	6	30.4	5	33	5	29	X	-	6½=
LA	7	31.2	4	35	3	32	X	-	6½=
N.C.	8	36.0	6	28	6	25	X	-	6½=
TEX	9	36.8	11	14	11	12	-	X	6½=
FLA	10	39.1	9	21	9	18	-	-	10½=
TENN	11	72.3	10	17	10	17	-	-	10½=

The rank order correlation between Negroes in the state in 1960 is high: .78. If we take population in 1940 it is even higher: .83. This is not particularly surprising since there is a good deal of inertia to be found in patterns of behaviour. Once restrictive legislation (in a state) or a tradition of not allowing Negroes to pass the literacy test (in a county) has become established, it will have some tendency to persistence even if circumstances change.
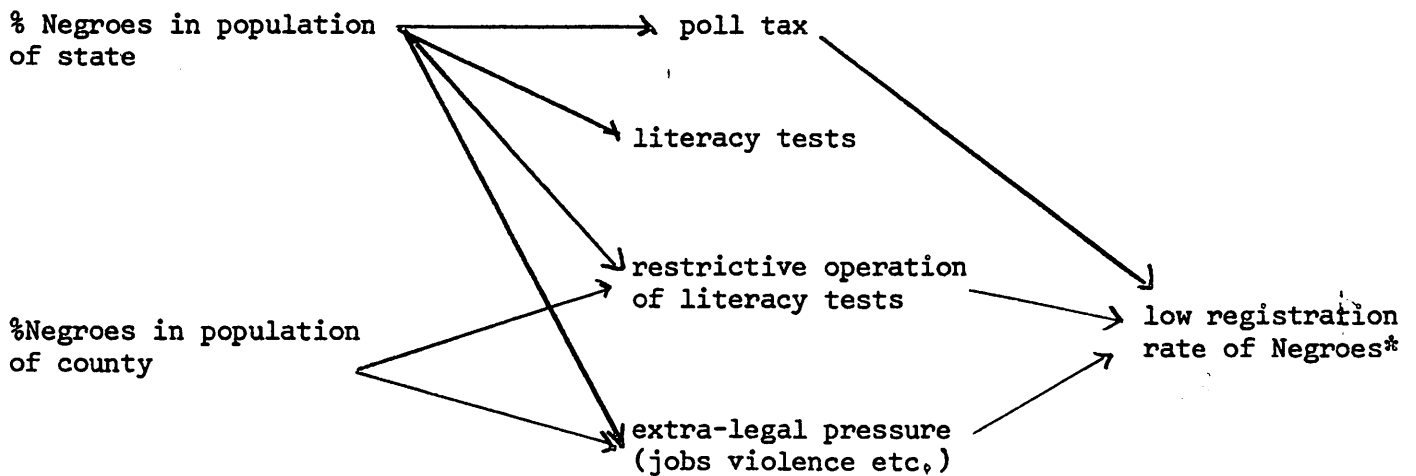
We should, however, beware of imagining that this inertia continues indefinately - the lag is a matter of decades. Matthews and Prothro mention that the high correlation between per cent Negro in 1900 in a county and registration in 1958 was reduced to —0.01 when the per cent Negro in 1950 was partialled out. Similarly, if we take a measure to be discussed below, the proportion of counties in a state with a majority of Negroes (figures given in Key, page 672) the correlation of the state ranks for 1900 with those for Negores registered in 1958 is .77, but if we take the ranks for 1940 it is .83. And since the correlation between ranks in 1900 and 1940 is .95 the correlation for 1900 can be regarded as spurious.

Introducing this new index enables us to settle a question speculated on by Key and never discussed by Matthews and Prothro. Key places great emphasis in his book on the "black belt" - the counties with big concentrations of Negroes - and suggests that it is these that really make the character of state politics. A sample quote: "The shrinkage of the black belt [operationally, counties over half Negro] is probably of greater importance than the simple decline in Negro population percentages for entire states" (page 672). We can now test this. First of all, the two measures are, not surprisingly, highly intercorrelated (.92 for the two in 1940). Secondly, both of them for 1940 (the only date for which I have both) correlate .83 (I swear I'm not making it up) with Negro registration. This is obviously tricky but if we dare to draw an inference it has to be that both have equal effects.

How does the state-wide effect of the proportion Negroes on Negro registration operate? In three ways: the poll tax has a direct effect; literacy and similar qualifications provide a convenient means by which registration officers (at the county or precinct level) can keep Negroes off the rolls if they choose; and they are more likely so to choose, the more Negroes there are in the state and in the county; and, beyond this, without benefit of law Negroes are more likely to be kept off the higher their proportions both in the state and the county. This is a very

complex model and the most crucial data (full details for counties) are not available, though Matthews and Prothro must have had them to calculate their correlations for all counties. Some of it, however, can be checked on.

Causal model of registration in a county

% Negroes in population of state → poll tax

literacy tests

restrictive operation of literacy tests

%Negroes in population of county

extra-legal pressure (jobs violence etc.)

low registration rate of Negroes*

* relatively to a white population with similar educational, occupational and income levels.

Thus we can show that a poll tax and literacy tests both have an effect on voting by ranking states by whether they had both, one or none of them in 1958. The rank correlation with Negro registration (reversed) in 1958 is .83.

We can also however show that this correlation is not simply a reflection of some unspecified causal path going from the proportion of Negroes in the population to the proportion registered, combined with a high correlation between the proportion of Negroes and the restrictive legislation. For the correlation of Negroes registered in 1958 with the proportion of Negroes in 1960 is .78 (for 1940, .83), while the correlation between voting restrictions in 1958 and Negroes in the population in 1960 is only .56 (for 1940 .63). The conclusion to be drawn from this is plainly that restrictive voting laws have a quite powerful effect in depressing Negro registration independently of

the effects of the proportion of Negroes in a state.

	% REG 1958	Restrictive Leg.
% Reg 1958	-	.83
% Negro 1960	.78	.56

It is interesting to ask whether the correlation of .56 with 1960 Negro proportions and .63 for 1940 Negro proportions could be improved by (a) taking proportions of counties with over half Negroes and (b) going back to 1900, the period in which most states introduced poll taxes and literacy tests. Both hypothesis are strongly suggested by Key, who argues that the legislation was pushed through by those living in the "black belt" counties, over the indifference or opposition of other whites. Be that as it may, the correlation of restrictive legislation in 1958 with the proportion of counties with Negro majorities in 1940 is .55(compared with .63 using straight proportions of Negroes in 1940) and .51 in 1900. And this .51 looks very sick when one notes that the 1900/1940 intercorrelation is, perhaps surprisingly, as high as .95.

Thus, though it may well be that voting restrictions in say, 1910 matched Negro proportions (however measured) to the tune of .55 or maybe even more, the relative lowness of the later figure cannot be attributed to inertia. For in the absence of any perceptible change in the rankings of the states in Negro proportions, a much higher correlation in the past would entail subsequent changes in the states' legislation in order to explain the fall in the correlation!

	% Reg 1958	Restrictive Leg.
% Reg 1958	-	.83
% Counties over half negro 1940	.83	.55

My assertation that poll tax has a direct effect in depressing statewide Negro registration levels, whereas the effects of literacy and cognate tests depends on the disfranchising use made of them is plausible, surely. To show further that the severity of restriction introduced by a literacy test in a given county is a function both of the proportion of Negroes in the state and the proportion of Negroes in the county would require the county data which are not to my knowledge in print. However, direct inspection of the table already presented yields some support.

Thus, contrary to Key's view that poll taxes have negligible effects on Negro registrations, the evidence suggests that poll taxes have a fairly uniform and quite severe effect - thus Arkansas with 25% of Negroes in 1940 and poll tax in 1958 has a registration figure below that of three of the four states with literacy tests, though all three had more Negroes in 1940; and Texas, with a mere 14% of Negroes in 1940, had a registration rate below Florida or Tennessee, with more Negroes but neither a poll tax or literacy test.

If we look at literacy tests it is clear that these can be major or minor barriers: South Carolina with only a litercy test holds its registered Negroes will below the level of two of the three states with both literacy tests and poll taxes, but of course it also has more Negroes than those states, which no doubt gives a greater impetus to the use of the test to defranchise Negroes. On the other hand, if we look at the three other states with only literacy tests, the defranchising effects look much less severe. It is not of course possible to say anything at all about county variations within states, but Matthews and Prothro do give data on North Carolina which show that at any rate there are quite noticeable county effects. That is to say, in counties with few Negores, the literacy test is administered on the whole rarely, but in counties with more Negroes it is used as an instrument of discrimination (154-5). Assuming this holds elsewhere, I think I can claim to have given some evidence for the independent effect of each link in the model I put forward except for an effect of the proportion of Negroes in a county which is not mediated through the disfranchising effects of literacy tests. This requires evidence from states without literacy tests on county-by-county variations in registration which (to repeat) is not available.

V

To return from this exercise in pre-elementry statistics to what is supposed to be the point of this part of the paper: we cannot get anywhere by talking about "mobilizing" the "dominant" group, as if it were a unit to be disposed at will by some Napoleon of white supremacy. We have to look at each decision-point and ask what are the alternatives open to an actor at that point and what are his perceived rewards and costs.

If you are registering Negroes in a county with few Negroes but in a state with many, it is clear that you are not going to alter an election outcome by disqualifying Negroes, but if doing that is popular with your electorate you will do it. The fact that the same reduction in another country with more Negroes would do more good to the cause of white supremacy is irrelevant, since nothing you can do at anything like the same cost would have that effect. This is of course why even at very low Negro proportions the average figures for Negro registrations in Southern counties are still less than half those of whites - a difference far too great to be made up by what Matthews and Prothro admit to be the relatively weak variables of education, income and occupational status. We might compare here the strategy of British political parties. Insofar as they spend their central funds on local parties and local campaigns, they funnel them into the constituencies they just need to win if they are to get a majority in the House of Commons. Active supporters can be got to travel from safe seats to adjacent marginal ones, but if there are no marginal ones near, they must be deployed in the most marginal one there is. They cannot be expected to travel a hundred miles to canvass.

In other words, when thinking of "the resources" of, say, "a political party" we have to break them down according to their specificity, and to the structure of decisions. (Without central war-chests, the significance of the total amount spent by "the party" will obviously be much less than if the money is centrally directed, except (as with some big givers in the USA) insofar as the fund-givers use much the same criteria as the party to win they could equally well give it to the centre.)

We can also see now why the proportion of registered Negroes to all registered voters goes up as the proportion of Negroes rises, especially as it gets to 65%, 75% and 85%. Instead of adopting Blalock's completely arbitrary assumption that "whites

in the South" want to keep the ratio of white to Negro registered voters constant in each county, we need to look on the problem in cost-benefit terms.

The figures suggest that squeezing the average registration level of Negroes for a block of counties with similar proportions of Negroes down below about 7% must be hard and increasingly hard work. The explanation is, I take it, that there are presumably an average 5% of wo of well-educated Negroes not dependent economically on white favour in each block of counties; and, except in Mississippi, (and to a somewhat smaller extent, South Carolina) the cost of registering them is presumably judged less than the trouble caused by refusing to.

For a given amount of effort devoted to 'mobilizing' it is better value for more whites simply to turn out and actually vote. This is doubtless the significance of the correlation between white voting and Negro registration mentioned earlier. At a pinch, it is also possible for more whites to register and this is I take it at least part of the explanation of the way in which very high levels of white registration (90+%) are associated with a larger than average proportion of Negroes though this relationship then ceases to hold down to 30% Negro, below which white registration drops a bit further.

It should, of course be added that even if a substantial number of Negroes do both register and vote, this need not bring them any gains so long as they stay in a minority of the voters. Provided the white voters stick together and punish any candidate who makes even the smallest concession to the Negor electorate, they can ensure that the policies pursued by successful candidates remain the same as they would be if there were no Negroes in the electorate. (See Keech, The Impact of Negro Voting pages 99-106) This is, if you like, a further stage of possible "mobilization" by whites, though it illustrates the misleadingness of makingg any effective collective use of resources synonymous with "mobilization", since it requires no organization or co-ordination among white voters.

VI

To sum up (and not before time) the main trouble with Blalock's treatment is that in order to establish a "power" relation he has to postulate that the dominant group wishes to maintain an invariant superiority irrespective of the proportion of the

minority group. The evidence for the existence of the power relation is just that
the dominant group does establish an invariant superiority. This is surely as
blatant an example of putting the rabbit in the hat and then triumphantly pulling
it out again as any in the melancholy annals of social science. Moreover, even
if some independent criterion for power could be provided - and I have suggested that
when it takes the form of discrimination against a group this can quite easily be
done, at least in principle - it is not at all clear that the "multiplicative
relationship" between resources and mobilization in itself helps very much. My
feeling is that they are strictly ex-post terms - that we describe and try to explain
the exercise of power first and then, if we choose, fit it into the resource -
mobilization framework. In particular, resources are not simply something you either
have or don't have, and mobilization is not a fixed tendency to use some given
proportion of one's resources.

The whole business can, in my view only be made sense of by putting it in a
broadly "economic" framework. Rather than thinking of a fixed stock of "resources"
which somebody either "mobilizes" or doesn't, we should think of people (or organizations
if that is the decision-point of our analysis) as deciding whether to convert other
things (money, time, health, status, liking) into the currency of power. The extent
to which they will choose to do this at any moment will obviously depend on the prevail-
ing exchange rate at each of the margins and what can be got with an increment of
power. This sounds formidable, and is. The trick, for future development in the
subject, is to find the short cuts that work. This is partly a matter of analytical
devices (much of the growth of economics has depended on finding devices which enable
analysis to proceed) such as working out a theory which takes the stock of power as
fixed (in effect a free good) and concentrating on its disposition, then trying to
extend it. But it is also a matter of finding out in what context which phenomena are
important and which can be slighted.