Civil Rights, World War II, and U.S. Public Opinion

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Abstract Scholars of American politics often assume World War II liberalized white racial attitudes. This conjecture is generally premised on the existence of an ideological tension between a war against Nazism and the maintenance of white supremacy at home, particularly the southern system of Jim Crow. A possible relationship between the war and civil rights was also suggested by a range of contemporaneous voices, including academics like Gunnar Myrdal and activists like Walter White and A. Philip Randolph. However, while intuitively plausible, this relationship is generally not well-verified empirically. A common flaw is the lack of attention to public opinion polls from the 1940s. Using the best available survey evidence, I argue the war’s impact on white racial attitudes is more limited than is often claimed. First, I demonstrate that for whites in the mass public, while there is some evidence of slight liberalization on issues of racial prejudice, this does not extend to policies addressing racial inequities. White opposition to federal antilynching legislation actually seems to have increased during the war. Second, there is some evidence of racial moderation among white veterans, relative to their counterparts who did not serve. White veterans were more supportive of anti-lynching legislation in the immediate postwar period, and offered stronger support for black voting rights in the early 1960s. However, they were not distinguishable on many other issues, including measures of racial prejudice and attitudes towards segregation.

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Notions that World War II – particularly the logic of fighting a war against Nazi racism – led to increases in white support for black civil rights are widespread. Civil rights activists, journalists, academics, and others at the time regularly claimed that when shown “the gross discrepancy between our ideals and our practices,” as one contemporaneous observer described it, white Americans would be forced to confront their own racial prejudices and legacies of discrimination, resulting in a major step forward for racial progress.1 Indeed, claims about World War II’s impact on white racial attitudes can be found in sources ranging from contemporaneous accounts to present-day historical institutionalist scholarship and scattered other sources like constitutional law books.4 Sometimes the claim is direct and central (e.g., Myrdal’s An American Dilemma); at other times, it is taken for granted in the background (e.g., Klinkner and Smith’s The Unsteady March). However, in making varied assumptions about the war’s impact on white attitudes, such accounts have systematically ignored public opinion surveys from the 1940s that might allow for a better empirical assessment of such claims.

This paper provides such an assessment. Based on an analysis of the available survey evidence, I argue the war’s impact on white racial attitudes is far more limited than is widely assumed.5 While there is some evidence white racial prejudice decreased during the war, this is not true for attitudes toward racially egalitarian policies. White opposition to federal anti-lynching legislation seems to have actually increased during the war, while attitudes toward the poll tax remained almost constant. I also assess whether serving in the war liberalized white veterans, relative to their non-veteran counterparts. I find a much more complex story among veterans. They are not

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5Of course, “the war” itself did not directly have any impact on civil rights politics. Rather, various actors use the opportunities presented by wartime to make new rhetorical claims and policy demands in the context of war. For a general discussion of the nature of “wartime,” see Mary L. Dudziak, War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).
distinguishable on a wide range of racial prejudice measures. However, they are distinctive on two issues: In the late 1940s, they were more likely to support federal anti-lynching legislation; and in the early 1960s, white veterans in the South offered stronger support for black voting rights.

These results have implications for political science in several ways. First, this paper serves as a useful corrective to common assumptions about the war’s effects on white racial attitudes. The few political science analyses of how the war did impact civil rights have focused entirely on social movements and elite institutions. As such, their background claims about mass attitudes have been unsubstantiated.6 Second, this paper complements work assessing the individual-level impacts of military service on black southerners.7 While civil rights historians have long believed service in the Second World War had transformative impacts on black veterans — and this has been affirmed by survey analysis by Parker — there has been much less historical scholarship about white veterans in this regard, and none that I am aware of has utilized survey data. By combining analyses of surveys in the war’s immediate aftermath that identified veteran status with the white sample of the 1961 Negro Political Participation Study survey Parker used to analyze black veterans, this paper complements previous scholarship by offering a different vantage point.

The paper proceeds as follows: I begin with historical background, particularly by situating the analysis with reference to contemporaneous discussions of the war and civil rights in the 1940s. I then relate this to present-day academic accounts that have addressed these themes and show what is missing from these scholarly accounts. Second, I develop a framework for assessing the possibility of white racial attitude change in the World War II era by drawing on theoretical accounts of attitude change in the mid-1960s civil rights era and accounts of the effects of World War II era military service on black veterans. This leads to two testable hypotheses regarding the liberalization of white racial attitudes. After framing my inquiry, I discuss the datasets used and methods necessary to adequately work with them. I then present the results of my analysis. I conclude with a discussion of how this study of white racial attitudes can help build a broader

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6 Klinkner and Smith, The Unsteady March; Kryder, Divided Arsenal; Saldin, War, the American State, and Politics since 1898.
framework for understanding the potentially heterogeneous effects of the Second World War on American racial politics.

Background

Historical context

Many elites in the 1940s saw a connection between the war effort and domestic racial issues. The most famous example is Gunnar Myrdal and his mammoth study *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*. Over the course of nearly 1,500 pages, Myrdal made the contradiction between the aims of war and Jim Crow clear:

This War is an ideological war fought in defense of democracy. The totalitarian dictatorships in the enemy countries had even made the ideological issue much sharper in this War than it was in the First World War. Moreover, in this War the principle of democracy had to be applied more explicitly to race. Fascism and nazism are based on a racial superiority dogma – not unlike the old hackneyed American caste theory – and they came to power by means of racial persecution and oppression. In fighting fascism and nazism, America had to stand before the whole world in favor of racial tolerance and the inalienable human freedoms.\(^8\)

The book is filled with such claims. “There looms a ‘Negro aspect’ over all post-war problems,” Myrdal proclaimed.\(^9\) Some 571 pages later, he was more confident in his phrasing: “There is bound to be a redefinition of the Negro’s status in America as a result of this War.”\(^10\) Overall, Myrdal believed the cost of the racial order was becoming too large to sustain. “Caste is becoming an expensive luxury of white men,” he wrote.\(^11\) Myrdal’s book was, according to Brinkley, a “major factor in drawing white liberal attention to problems of race – precisely because Myrdal himself discussed racial injustice as a rebuke to the nation’s increasingly vocal claim to be the defender of democracy and personal freedom in a world menaced by totalitarianism.”\(^12\) Although it received some scattered criticism, the nature of the book – its social scientific language, non-

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\(^8\)Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 1004.  
\(^9\)Ibid., 426.  
\(^10\)Ibid., 997.  
\(^11\)Ibid., 1017.  
partisan sponsorship, massive length, Myrdal’s European-ness – led it to seem like a “definitive analysis” of the American race problem in elite discourse.\textsuperscript{13}

This was also perceived, in more negative terms, by certain prominent racial conservatives. Dixiecrat intellectual leader Charles Wallace Collins worried the war “offered the opportunity for the rationalization of the position of the Negro as a citizen of the United States in a time of war.”\textsuperscript{14} He did not view this prospect in a positive light.

Along with the general sense that the war might lead to aggregate changes in white attitudes, there was likewise a more specific belief that serving in the war would make white veterans more racially tolerant:

During the Detroit race riots in 1943 three sailors waded in to a white mob which was beating unmercifully a slender Negro youth. “He isn’t doing you guys any harm. Let him alone!” one of the trio shouted as he and his companions rescued the Negro and fought back the mob.

“What’s it to you?” one of the rioters snarled.

“Plenty,” replied the sailor. “There was a colored guy in our outfit in the Pacific and he saved the lives of two of my buddies. Besides, you guys are stirring up here at home something we are fighting to stop!”\textsuperscript{15}

This suggestive anecdote is drawn from NAACP leader Walter White’s 1945 book \textit{A Rising Wind}. Although perhaps apocryphal – White had a tendency to capture dialogue in a manner that seems awkwardly folksy to contemporary ears – such tales nevertheless reached a wide audience and were consistent with other accounts at the time suggesting the war had liberalized the previously racist views of white soldiers fighting for democracy.

White shared other interesting stories as well. In England, White visited the black GI Liberty Club – despite his taxi driver’s insistence that he must mean the white Rainbow Club. Although designed for black soldiers, there were some white GIs present as well – “the Georgia accent of one of them was thick as the mud of the Chattahoochee,” according to White. The white Georgian told him he preferred the Liberty Club to any of the white clubs because he had become friends

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.: 169-70; for criticism, see, e.g., Leo P. Crespi, “Is Gunnar Myrdal on the Right Track?” \textit{Public Opinion Quarterly}, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1945, 201-212. Ralph Ellison also penned a notable critique.


\textsuperscript{15}Walter White, \textit{A Rising Wind}, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.: 1945), 124-25.
with some black soldiers who would not be welcome at the all-white alternatives. White inquired about whether these friendships would continue upon his stateside return:

Ruefully, he spread his hands, palms upward, and shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know,” he said sadly.\textsuperscript{16}

Another white soldier recounted his experiences at the Stage Door Canteen in New York City prior to being sent overseas. The first time the soldier went there he found black hosts and service-men and he left in anger. But because the canteen was the standard gathering place for soldiers unfamiliar with the city, he went back several times and had a change of heart. “If we can play together, why can’t we fight together?” he asked White. When informed of proposals to establish an integrated unit white and black soldiers could volunteer to join, he replied, “I’d like to be the first to volunteer. Then I wouldn’t feel like a Goddamned hypocrite when people over here ask why, in fighting a war for democracy, the United States sends over one white and one Negro army.”\textsuperscript{17}

However, not all of White’s interviews were so positive. Many white soldiers expressed significant prejudice. Racial rumors abounded, generally started when white Americans told European locals wild tales of supposed black behavior.\textsuperscript{18} Perhaps a more interesting anecdote, however, is White’s conversation with General Eisenhower. Referring to a discussion with an unnamed New York journalist, Eisenhower “almost belligerently” exclaimed to White, “He told me my first duty was to change the social thinking of the soldiers under my command, especially on racial issues. I told him he was a damned fool – that my first duty is to win wars and that any changes in social thinking would be purely incidental. Don’t you think I was right?”\textsuperscript{19}

More academic work also connected military service to potential changes in racial attitudes. In 1943’s \textit{To Stem this Tide: A Survey of Racial Tension Areas in the United States}, Charles Johnson and his associates shared an anecdote from Evansville, Indiana, where a train conductor ordered a group of white and black soldiers from the same town to separate but a white soldier refused

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 36-7.
\textsuperscript{19}White, \textit{A Rising Wind}, 63.
the order and threatened to “fight[...] the entire train crew.” In the war’s aftermath, University of North Carolina sociologist Howard Odum, writing in 1948, described “a relatively large number of young college students and returning G.I.’s advocating a more liberal practice with reference to race relations” in the white South. These claims fit with what Walter White was telling the War Department. In an April 1944 memorandum, for instance, Walter White described his tour of the North African and Middle Eastern Theatres of Operation. “As men approach actual combat and the dangers of death, the tendency becomes more manifest to ignore or drop off pettiness such as racial prejudice... When German shells and bombs are raining about them, they do not worry as much about the race or creed of the man next to them.”

The historiography on the relationship between World War II and black civil rights reflects the possible ambiguities of the relationship. In the 1960s, this era was referred to as the “forgotten years of the Negro revolution.” In the strongest form of this perspective, one historian declared that “the war in many ways made the civil rights movement possible.” More recently, historians have increasingly taken a more critical perspective on the war’s relationship with civil rights. “If historians search for the roots of the civil rights movement in the wartime struggle, they will doubtlessly find something in the discordant record resembling the evidence they seek,” Kevin Kruse and Stephen Tuck write. While acknowledging “the turmoil and rhetoric and bloodshed of war did indeed provide a far-reaching challenge to Southern, national and global systems of race,” they argue it “did not push racial systems in a single direction, and certainly not one moving inexorably toward greater equality.”

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21 Odum, “Social Change in the South,” 244.
22 Memo, Walter White to War Department, Official File, OF 93, Colored Matters (Negroes), Apr-May 1944, FDR Library
The war, racial attitudes, and historical institutionalists

Present day scholarship has similarly made claims about the war’s effects on racial attitudes. Klinkner and Smith’s *The Unsteady March*, for example, argues war is a necessary, albeit not sufficient, condition for racial progress in the United States. Kryder’s *Divided Arsenal* demonstrates how wars in American history coincide with increases in racial crowd violence, and often have the effect of centralizing state power. More recently, Saldin’s *War, the American State, and Politics since 1898* offers a more general and expansive overview of how war has shaped American domestic policy, including the greater inclusion of marginalized groups.

These three works all share a focus on political institutions. However, they also make several striking off-handed comments about the relationship between the war and white attitudes – without any original analysis of public opinion data. Klinkner and Smith claim, for example, that it is “hard to escape the conclusion” that the “Nazi menace forced at least some white Americans to begin to reexamine the racial inequalities in their midst.” This is a very clear claim, but not verified with reference to survey data. Later, they fill in the causal processes. “[T]he ideological demands of fighting an enemy who espoused racial hierarchies made more white Americans sensitive to the presence of racial discrimination in America,” they argue. “The vision of blacks marching to claim their rights contradicted the image of America as the defender of democracy.” Klinkner and Smith do offer some willingness to concede that white opinion in the South did not liberalize, and perhaps even hardened in its white supremacist resolve. But in general, their claim about a shift in white attitudes is fairly strong. This claim about public opinion affects not only their assessment of the public, but also normative assessments of other actors like President Roosevelt. “Roosevelt’s unwillingness to take a stronger stand on racial issues was, in hindsight, regrettable and costly,” they argue. “True, white Southerners were becoming more restive, but it seems clear that in the context of the war, nationally public attitudes on race had shifted enough that he could have been more outspoken for reform.”

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26 Klinkner and Smith, *The Unsteady March*, 137.
27 Ibid.: 160
28 Ibid.: 168
29 Ibid.: 199
any public opinion data.\textsuperscript{30}

This account has notably been itself cited as evidence for such claims in more recent work. Saldin, for example, refers to Klinkner and Smith as an authority in asserting an “undeniable growth of racial liberalism link[ed] to World War II.”\textsuperscript{31} As such, even while Klinkner and Smith’s research is not centrally concerned with public opinion, it has had the effect of strengthening the view that World War II liberalized white racial attitudes.\textsuperscript{32}

Although this paper focuses on the nature of white mass opinion, this tendency extends into other realms like the attitudes of white elite political actors. For instance, it is often taken for granted that the 1944 \textit{Smith v. Allwright} case outlawing the white primary was motivated, at least in part, by the ideological logic of the Second World War. Yet the evidence for this claim is surprisingly lacking. The legal scholar Michael Klarman is perhaps the clearest example. While Klarman gives some credit to “Roosevelt’s virtually complete recomposition of the Court,” he argues this explanation is “missing something more fundamental – the significance of World War II.” His argument, however, is surprisingly vague. “This is necessarily a point of speculation,” he acknowledges, “because nothing in the \textit{Smith} opinion or the surviving conference notes refers to the significance of the war. Still, the Justices cannot have failed to observe the tension between a purportedly democratic war fought against the Nazis, with their theories of Aryan supremacy, and the pervasive disenfranchisement of Southern blacks.”\textsuperscript{33} Klinkner and Smith make a similar argument. “The Court’s decision in \textit{Smith} reflected its emerging stress on the protection of civil and political rights, an emphasis influenced by the changing global context,” they write. Although they acknowledge that Justice Stanley Reed, who wrote the \textit{Smith} majority opinion, “made no mention of the war,” they point to two sources: A \textit{New York Times} correspondent, who declared

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\item\textsuperscript{30}To be clear, this critique of their sporadic references to mass attitudes should not be taken in itself to imply a critique of their theoretical framework, which focuses on elite political institutions and social movements.
\item\textsuperscript{31}Saldin, \textit{War, the American State, and Politics since 1898}, 114. Elsewhere, Saldin is somewhat more nuanced than Klinkner and Smith in his assumptions about public opinion. See pp. 114-15.
\item\textsuperscript{32}Kryder likewise makes assumptions about the white public, albeit somewhat more negatively than Klinkner and Smith. Kryder suggests Americans were “less familiar with the aims of the war and their relationship to democratic ideals than Myrdal believed.” See Kryder, \textit{Divided Arsenal}, 10.
\item\textsuperscript{33}Michael J. Klarman, “The White Primary Rulings: A Case Study in the Consequences of Supreme Court Decision-making,” \textit{Florida State University Law Review} 29, 2001, 64. Klarman’s discussion of how increases in southern legal challenges were partly a result of “the greater black militancy spawned by World War II” is more convincing. Ibid., 76. Such a claim fits with Parker, \textit{Fighting for Democracy}.
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the “real reason” for the Court’s move against the white primary was “that the common sacrifices of wartime have turned public opinion and the Court against previously sustained devices to exclude minorities”; and a 1979 book by the historian Darlene Clark Hine, which argues, “The white primary was one of the casualties of World War II.” However, neither source provides direct evidence that the *Smith* case was affected by the war, yet they are treated as though they do.35

**Military service and racial attitudes**

Scholarship on the attitudinal and behavioral impacts of the war on veterans, by contrast, has used public opinion data. However, it has focused almost entirely on black veterans. Parker, for example, convincingly argues military service in the Second World War, as well as the Korean War, had a direct impact on the willingness of black veterans in the South to challenge the white supremacist status quo.36 However, this analysis leaves open the question of why the war might not have also had significant ramifications on white attitudes and political behavior. For example, Parker argues that “we should expect black Southerners who were exposed to different, more egalitarian cultures to have begun an aggressive interrogation of white supremacy.” Yet he leaves unanswered the question of why this should not also be true for whites who experienced these same “more egalitarian cultures.” Partially this discrepancy rests on Parker’s acceptance of traditional models of military service – based on the more conventional rights-obligation trade-off or more recent rational choice accounts – as sufficient for explaining white male participation, but not black male participation since they did possess the same full rights of citizenship.38 However, this seems to leave under-theorized the reason why exposure to relatively more egalitarian race relations – such as those white soldiers serving in countries like France certainly saw – did not

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34Klinkner and Smith, *The Unsteady March*, 193.
37Parker, *Fighting for Democracy*, 95.
38Ibid.: 18-19
have similarly transformative impacts on white attitudes.

Work on white veterans has been more local and specific. Sokol’s history of white southern reactions to civil rights quotes individual white southern men who, as a result of their service in the Second World War, came to learn “that freedom means more than just freedom for the white man,” as one phrased it. However, Sokol suggests such attitude changes were small, constituting “only a small fraction of white southern servicemen.” Although Sokol’s analysis is enlightening in many respects, it stops short of being generalizable by the standards of political scientists.

Perhaps the best research on white veterans is Brooks’s analysis of veterans in postwar Georgia. While many southern black men returned from World War II determined to tear down white supremacy, Brooks suggests the impact of military service on returning white veterans was more heterogeneous. “A small but vocal minority of southern white veterans also defined the war’s meaning and their own participation in it as a mandate to implement a political freedom that applied to all Georgians,” she writes. These white veterans joined returning black soldiers in their efforts. However, this push for racial equality “provoked an immediate backlash from other white veterans determined to sustain all the power and prerogatives of white supremacy.”

What’s missing

This review suggests at least two avenues for research, then. First, is the available survey evidence consistent with the argument that World War II led to an increase in white racial liberalism? Second, in the war’s aftermath, were white veterans more racially liberal than their non-veteran counterparts? The next section relates these questions to theoretical frameworks for thinking about attitudinal change on race, and sets out testable hypotheses to assess the war’s impact on white racial attitudes.


Theoretical Framework

What does it mean to ask about the effect of something like “World War II”? To be a useful analytical concept, “the war” must be unpacked into its constitutive elements, each of which can have different logics. There are at least two distinctive aspects of World War II: (1) the ideological sense of the war; and (2) the massive material undertaking of the war. The former most obviously describes the anti-racist logic of a war against Nazism so many have linked it to. The latter includes shifts related to wartime industrialization and military build-up, including migration related to the former and manpower needs related to the latter. Industrial and military institutions were thus faced with new pressures as a result, which opened new possibilities and points of leverage for the civil rights movement, especially on job discrimination issues.

While acknowledging these political-economic changes (which I discuss further in the conclusion), this paper considers white racial attitudes as a vantage point from which to assess the war’s potential ideological logic: Did a war against Nazism and fascism lead to a rethinking of the racial status quo for white Americans on the homefront?41 However, this requires a clear framework for assessing the possibility of white attitudinal change. To build a framework to assessing attitude change, I first review theoretical debates about the catalysts for aggregate white racial attitude shifts in the 1960s civil rights era. I then analyze the framework provided by Parker in assessing changes in the attitudes of black veterans who served in World War II and Korea. This leads me to develop a framework for thinking about the possibility of aggregate white racial attitude shifts in the World War II era, as well as what we should expect regarding the racial attitudes of white veterans. Based on this framework, I set out two testable hypotheses.

41 Of course, the realities of political-economic change on the homefront could have shaped white attitudes as well, and I consider this at various points throughout. I also return to a broader discussion of political-economic changes in the conclusion.
White racial attitudes shifts in the civil rights era

Scholars have debated whether opinion shifts in the 1960s were elite-driven or more bottom-up.42 Others have pointed to childhood socialization and generational replacement.43 However, I focus here on the role of the national media. Many scholars of trends in public opinion point to the role of the media as a catalyst for change in white racial attitudes. Schuman et al., for example, refer to “many Northern whites who witnessed, through television and other media, the brutality of Bull Connor and other white supremacists.” They note that public opinion trends fit with historical accounts that “speak of the rethinking and searching of conscience that were prompted by the events of 1963.”44

Page and Shapiro also note this “pro-civil rights opinion trend,” and likewise suggest “[a] good many events of the late 1950s and early 1960s, heavily covered by the mass media, surely played a part.”45 Although they acknowledge “the general hostility of Americans to protests and demonstrations,” they argue “televised images of Southern policemen beating peaceful black demonstrators and setting dogs upon them galvanized the nation. There can be little doubt that the civil rights movement and Southern whites’ highly visible ‘massive resistance’ to it had a major impact on public opinion.”46 Media coverage – especially of violent white resistance to protesters – is seen as key by both of these major accounts of attitudinal trends.

Kellstedt offers the most systematic study of the relationship between aggregate racial attitude  

change and the quantity and tenor of media coverage. He shows how the quantity of stories in *Newsweek* spiked beginning in 1963, when there were 152 stories about race and civil rights. This continued for several years during the height of the 1960s civil rights movement. Kellstedt also points to the tenor of the coverage, demonstrating how this era saw media coverage that framed the debate in egalitarian, rather than individualistic, messages.\(^{47}\) This, he argues, was a hospitable environment for the growth of racial liberalism in aggregate public opinion. The role of the media is absolutely central for Kellstedt. Fitting with Schuman et al. and Page and Shapiro, he notes, “Most of the key events of the movement, after all – desegregation battles in Little Rock and elsewhere, bus boycotts, freedom rides – took place in communities that few non-southerners would have known about were it not for the national press.”\(^{48}\)

The 1960s civil rights era is a useful comparison for assessing possible racial attitude change during World War II because it highlights important historical differences. Most crucial perhaps is the variable role of the media in covering and framing civil rights protest. Compared to the mid-1960s, the national media in the World War II era largely did not discuss racial inequality.\(^{49}\) As such, any theoretical tensions between American ideals of egalitarianism and the reality of Jim Crow racism were not primed for most white Americans. Thus, while it is possible the ideological logic of the war led to a rethinking of racial attitudes, it is also possible this tension was perceived more by intellectuals than the white mass public more generally. Accounts of the war’s relationship with civil rights have tended to emphasize the plausibility of the ideological logic argument, rather than thinking through the degree to which it might extend to the broader public or not.

**Black veterans and civil rights attitudes**

Veterans are perhaps especially likely to be affected by wartime. Most veterans serve during what has been called “the impressionable years” of their late teens and early twenties, when at-


\(^{48}\)Kellstedt, 5.

\(^{49}\)This is of course quite the opposite of black newspapers, which regularly highlighted the tensions between a war for democracy and racism on the home front. Whites, however, were not attuned to this coverage. For a discussion of black newspapers and protest movements generally, see Charlotte G. O’Kelly, “Black Newspapers and the Black Protest Movement: Their Historical Relationship, 1827-1945,” *Phylon* 43(1), 1982, 1-14.
titudes of all sorts are most likely to crystallize.\textsuperscript{50} Parker analyzes the “radicalizing experience” of military service for southern black men in particular.\textsuperscript{51} He presents a theoretical framework to explain black veterans’ attitudes and behavior. Building on the citizen-soldier tradition in republican political thought, Parker examines how black veterans interpreted the meaning of their military experience, then argues this led to a new belief system he calls “black republicanism.”

In many ways, this framework is specific to the experience of black soldiers. For instance, Parker highlights the tension between how black soldiers were treated and the ideals for which they were fighting. White soldiers were simply not treated with the same sort of second-class status. However, his discussion of the effects of being deployed overseas raises interesting questions about effects on white soldiers. Parker, though, clearly distinguishes between white and black soldiers in this discussion. “For white servicemen, travel overseas resulted in increased self-awareness,” he writes. “For black servicemen, especially from the South, experiencing life overseas went beyond self-awareness. Deployment during the Second World War and the Korean War exposed well over a million black Southerners – who were accustomed to discrimination and oppressive conditions – to a model of race relations in which the indigenous, dominant group often treated them with a measure of respect.” This, he argues, gave them additional motivation “to question the legitimacy of white supremacy.”\textsuperscript{52}

Although they were differentially situated, white soldiers were nonetheless similarly exposed to such variation in race relations. As Parker note in a general sense, “exposing people to new patterns of social relations and cultural norms tends to expand their worldview by enlarging their perceptions of what is possible.” This logic, he argues, leads to an expectation that “black Southerners who were exposed to different, more egalitarian cultures to have begun an aggressive interrogation of white supremacy.”\textsuperscript{53} However, he leaves unspecified why such exposure might not also have at least some effect on how whites thought about race.

\textsuperscript{50}Parker, 72-73; see also Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott, “Generations and Collective Memories,” \textit{American Sociological Review} 54(3), 1989, 359-381.

\textsuperscript{51}Parker, 61. He relates this directly to Foner’s discussion of black service in the Civil War and its effects on their political behavior during Reconstruction. See Eric Foner, \textit{Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution}, (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

\textsuperscript{52}Parker, 72.

\textsuperscript{53}Parker, 95.
White soldiers experienced the war differently than whites on the homefront. Like black soldiers, white soldiers were also exposed to “more progressive cultures elsewhere,” where “dominant groups often treated [black soldiers] with a measure of respect.” We should not expect “an aggressive interrogation of white supremacy,” as Parker’s framework predicts for black veterans. However, insomuch as the experience could have “enlarg[ed] their perceptions of what is possible,” it might have at least led to new questions. It seems plausible, then, that exposure to new possibilities could have led at least some white veterans to be more open to racial liberalism. If any whites were to be liberalized as a result of the war, veterans would seem to be a very plausible candidate.

Assessing white racial attitude change during World War II

This discussion leads to two hypotheses, which I assess in the remainder of the paper. I call the first the racial liberalization hypothesis:

**Racial Liberalization Hypothesis**: World War II led to liberal shifts in white attitudes toward race and civil rights.

Hypothesis I is simply an explicitly stated version of the common view. Not everyone believe this – Kryder’s book suggests it is likely incorrect – but it is intellectually predominant. It is also entirely plausible. If the racial liberalization hypothesis is correct, the most plausible mechanism linking the war to white racial attitudes is the ideological logic of a war against Nazi racism undermining the intellectual plausibility of Jim Crow. Certainly civil rights activists – advocating as they did a Double-V campaign for victory at home and abroad – found this logic compelling.\(^54\) In the aftermath of the 1943 Detroit race riot, an editorial in *The Nation* declared, “We cannot fight fascism abroad while turning a blind eye to fascism at home. We cannot inscribe our banner ‘For democracy and a caste system’.”\(^55\) Such statements gave the institutional support of white liberals

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to similar claims being made by the black civil rights movement.

A plethora of anecdotal evidence likewise suggests that at least some individual whites saw the connection as well. Such accounts can be found in sources as scattered as constitutional law books. Writing of World War II, Alfred H. Kelly asserts, “[T]he egalitarian ideology of American war propaganda, which presented the United States as a champion of democracy engaged in a death struggle with the German racists, created in the minds and hearts of most white people a new and intense awareness of the shocking contrast between the country’s too comfortable image of itself and the cold realities of American racial segregation.”56 This claim is simply presented as background to a discussion of Brown v. Board; it is indicative of a widespread belief that the racial liberalization hypothesis is accurate in popular understandings of the war.

However, there is also theoretical grounding for a null or even negative result. Southern newspaper columnist John Temple Graves, for example, wrote in 1942, “[T]hey have invited their followers to think in terms of a Double V-for-Victory – victory in battle with Hitler and victory in battle at home. Victory, unhappily, doesn’t work that way.”57 Later in the same article, while detailing improvements in the conditions of black southerners during the war, he noted the decline of lynchings, but warned, “Unhappily the number may increase now as a result of the agitations of the white man against the black and the black against the white.”58 Indeed, it is possible to imagine southern whites fearing Double-V was being persuasive, and thus doubling down on their white supremacist resolve.

Further, the relative dearth of national media coverage relating to race and civil rights politics would imply a frameworks like that of Kellstedt’s would not apply as well to the World War II period. While the ingredients for an egalitarian media framing were there, the national media chose not to put it together. Many whites, therefore, simply might not have connected the dots. As such, a null result would be theoretically consistent with Kellstedt’s media-centric model.59

58 Ibid., 514.
59 For an account of how white journalists began covering civil rights to a much greater extent during the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s, see Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation, (New York: Knopf, 2006).
The second theoretical expectation is a variation on the racial liberalization hypothesis focused on distinctions between veterans of the war and those who did not serve directly:

**Racial Liberalization Hypothesis for Veterans:** World War II liberalized the racial attitudes of white veterans, relative to their non-veteran counterparts.

Hypothesis II shifts the focus from temporal shifts in the aggregate white public to differences between otherwise similar veterans and non-veterans. Whites who served in the military might have felt more closely connected with the anti-Nazi crusade; they might also have encountered black soldiers and changed their opinions about at least some aspects of race relations. Their exposure to the sorts of relatively more egalitarian cultures in places like France and England that Parker points to as inspiring black resistance might have likewise made white soldiers rethink the norms of their own country.

Theoretical grounding for a null result here can be found in arguments that white soldiers were fighting to defend their way of life – white supremacy and all – rather than something more transformative. Many white veterans simply wanted to return home and resume life exactly as they had left it. “That often meant supporting Jim Crow as staunchly as ever,” Sokol writes. “Many believed they had fought to defend, not overturn, racial customs.”

Brooks likewise points to the heterogeneous impacts the war had on white veterans in Georgia:

This destabilizing potential of the war’s impact, however, greatly alarmed many other southern whites, including veterans, who thought that fighting to defend the American way of life abroad also meant upholding the southern way of segregation and white rule at home. Such veterans tended to experience the economic, demographic, and social changes accelerated by the war for the South and Georgia—personified by black veterans determined to claim the political equality and economic opportunity that was their due—as a profound disruption of their confidence in the durability of white supremacy. The war’s subversive potential, reactionary veterans believed, undermined their own political prerogatives as white men, and thereby invoked their civic and male duty to defend the racial sanctity of the domestic and political sphere.

The extent to which various contradictory outcomes are entirely plausible suggests the merits of carefully assessing the evidence for each variant of the racial liberalization hypothesis. Expecta-

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60 Sokol, *There Goes My Everything*, 20, 23.
tions for effect size can be thought of in two ways. First, it is interesting to see if any change at all occurred. This would be a rudimentary test of the racial liberalization hypotheses. If no change at all occurs, at least on certain measures, that is a useful rebuttal in itself. However, if there is a shift on some measures, how big should the shift be? On the one hand, even during the civil rights era of the 1960s, Kellstedt points out that shifts were gradual. On the other hand, looking at white attitudes in the World War II era means starting at a lower point on the trajectory. As will be soon be described, expressed white racial prejudice in survey data is often shockingly high. This allows for the possibility of larger shifts – since the status quo is so low – especially on measures of basic prejudice. Finally, it is important to note this paper can only empirically examine relatively immediate effects of the war (with the exception of an examination of white veterans in 1961). Longer term effects – and effects of the sort that cannot be identified with survey data – are still possible. However, I argue looking at the available survey evidence is still a useful analytical perspective that can provide an important empirical baseline.

Finally, a quick aside is in order regarding the focus on whites. Ultimately, this paper chooses to restrict the analysis to whites for two reasons, one substantive and one methodological. Substantively, the broad question is about whether racist views can be brought into question by an external shock that undermines the credibility of such views. Focusing on whites makes sense in this regard. For the veterans analysis, analyzing white veterans complements the analysis of black veterans offered by Parker. Methodologically, the 1940s survey data under-sampled black respondents generally, but especially under-sampled southern black respondents. Since three-fourths of all African Americans lived in the South in the 1940s, this is a substantial methodological limitation for any analysis of black public opinion. Given this substantive focus and these methodological deficiencies of the quota sampling era data, I argue a focus on white attitudes is justified. Pairing the results presented here with other work – especially comparing the white veterans results with Parker’s analysis of black veterans – will result in a fuller depiction of racial attitudes

\[62\] In terms of distinguishing expectations for immediate and lagged effects on veterans, the effect could be immediate but then decay over time. Alternately, the effect could be immediate and permanent. One data limitation is that the questions I am able to analyze in the late 1940s were not asked in the 1960s. The questions about prejudice changed in nature, and the issue of antilynching legislation was no longer part of the civil rights agenda by the 1960s. However, as will be shown, there is really no difference between veterans and non-veterans on measures of prejudice in either time period. Rather, it is a particular set of policy issues where differences emerge.
more generally.

**Data and Methodology**

To assess the first hypothesis, I use public opinion surveys from 1937-1950. I examine measures of prejudice and policy preferences that are repeated at multiple time points. This involves six questions about general racial sentiments, and policy questions about lynching and the poll tax. I discuss the question wordings in the relevant sections. Readers might also expect discussion of the proposed Soldier Voting Act, as it relates directly to the connection between the war and the claims of civil rights groups. A question about giving black soldiers ballots as part of the congressional soldier voting debate was indeed asked in 1944. However, this question was never repeated, so it is not possible to assess over time change. For interested readers, however, I offer an analysis of the cross-sectional numbers in the Online Appendix.

To correct for the known biases of the quota sampling procedure employed at the time, I use the method advocated by Berinsky. This effectively involves breaking the sample into demographic subgroups and using Census data to weight each subgroup according to their share of the population. This is discussed along with question wordings throughout. To assess aggregate shifts, I make a series of temporal comparisons using the weighted numbers. If the racial liberalization hypothesis is correct, then the liberal position on each issue should increase over time. However, if there is no change – or if there is actually an increase in the conservative position – then the racial liberalization hypothesis is not supported

To assess the second hypothesis, I examine public opinion surveys from two distinct time periods: the mid- to late-1940s, to assess the more immediate impact of the war; and the early 1960s, to assess the more longterm impact. The methodological challenge here is I need surveys that ask about race or civil rights and also identify veteran status. The first section uses two surveys that were used in the previous section, but in a slightly different way. I also use an additional survey

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63 [iPoll Databank](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html).
65 For more detailed instructions, see Berinsky and Schickler’s supplementary files on the iPoll website.
that asked about military integration. I then move ahead in time and use the “Negro Political Participation Study,” a survey of black and white southerners – defined as the former Confederate states – conducted in 1961. This study merits further introduction. The Negro Political Participation Study was conducted by principal investigators Donald Matthews and James Prothro at the University of North Carolina.\textsuperscript{66} This survey uses the more modern NES sample design. Thus, while it is limited by the lack of a non-southern comparison group, it does not face the limitations of the quota controlled samples used in the previous surveys. This is the same survey used by Parker, who focused on the black sample. I utilize the white sample to address the questions stated earlier. I discuss the question wordings in the relevant sections.

Methodologically, my goal here is to estimate the relationship between veteran status and racial attitudes, controlling for other factors. I opt to run regressions on the male sample only. I argue this makes clear theoretical sense – while some women served in units like the Women’s Army Corps, the battles of World War II were fought almost entirely men – although it does have the methodological shortcoming of lowering the number of observations in the models. I also restrict the sample by age to focus on those who could have plausibly been veterans. To determine what age range to use, I look at the age and veteran status cross-tabs. For the models using the 1946 dataset, I analyze only those individuals age 40 and below. For the 1948 datasets, I use age 45 as the cut off. For the 1961 dataset, I look only at those between 38 and 65 to best assess the World War II generation. This, too, lowers the number of observations, but it also reduces the possibility that veteran status is simply capturing age effects.

Education – necessarily controlled for because of sampling concerns in the 1940s datasets\textsuperscript{67} – takes on additional importance when studying veterans, especially in the later time period. The 1961 cross-tabs are suggestive. In the white sample used here, 26 percent of respondents had some college experience; 25 percent had served in the military. But among the 25 percent with military service, a much larger 39 percent had some college experience, compared to only 21 percent of non-veterans. Indeed, a bivariate logistic regression of having attended college on veteran status

\textsuperscript{66}This dataset was obtained from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan. ICPSR Website, “http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/.

\textsuperscript{67}Berinsky suggests using the weighting variables as explanatory variables in regression models.
is highly statistically significant. This is likely largely due to the effects of the 1944’s Servicemen’s Readjustment Act – the G.I. Bill – which substantially aided white veterans in attending college. For more experimentally-minded readers, I address concerns about post-treatment bias in the Online Appendix.

Results: Racial Liberalization Hypothesis in the White Mass Public

This section addresses the first hypothesis, that World War II led to a liberalization of white racial attitudes in the aggregate. If this is correct, we should see a liberal shift in racial attitudes, both prejudice and policy. I also examine subgroup variation related to region and size of place to further assess the aggregate trends. I find that while it is possible to argue there were slight liberal shifts in racial prejudice, this was simply not the case for policy attitudes. White opposition to federal anti-lynching legislation actually seems to have grown during the war, and there was no discernible change on the poll tax.

Racial prejudice, 1943-1946

In 1944, NORC administered “Survey #1944-0225: Attitudes Toward Negroes,” a national survey of white attitudes. The sample is 2,521 national white adults who were interviewed face to face. While other surveys asked a question here and there about race in the midst of other inquiries, this survey is entirely about race. The results provide a unique look at white attitudes in the middle of World War II. This particular survey made a number of people uncomfortable. In December 1944,

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a confidential report summarizing the results was sent to seventy-five people asking for comments on how it might be used in a constructive manner and whether it would be advisable to release the numbers into general distribution. Later the results were in the process of being prepared for publication by the American Council on Race Relations, but the council was concerned about a preliminary release. “The danger of publishing such figures, without due caution and interpretation,” they argued, “lies in the fact that many persons reading the results of the poll would mistake figures published for actual facts.”

Six of the questions from this survey were repeated on a single occasion. While this is not an ideal number of data points from a contemporary perspective, it is a goldmine by the standards of 1940s survey research. This section compares the aggregate and regional numbers between $t_1$ and $t_2$ to offer some assessment of change over time. Assessing any potential shift from 1943 to 1944 might be of some inherent interest, but unfortunately it does not allow for a during and postwar comparison. However, the 1944 and 1946 comparison does offer this and fortunately most of the questions were repeated at this point. A good living question (“Do you think Negroes have the same chance as white people to make a good living in this country?”) was asked in a November 1943 survey titled “Postwar Problems, Old Age Pension, Public Schools and Free Speech.” This survey interviewed 2,560 national adults face to face. Later, five of the questions were repeated in a May 1946 survey titled “Minorities; United Nations.” This survey interviewed 2,589 national adults face to face. There was a question about fair treatment (“Do you think most Negroes in the United States are being treated fairly or unfairly?”), jobs (“Do you think Negroes should have as good a chance as white people to get any kind of job, or do you think white people should have the first chance at any kind of job?”), blood (As far as you know, is Negro blood the same as white blood, or is it different in some way?”), intelligence (“In general, do you think Negroes are as intelligent as white people – that is, can they learn just as well if they are given the same education?”), and having a black nurse (“If you were sick in a hospital, would it be all right with you if you had a Negro nurse, or wouldn’t you like it?”). The blood question might seem strange

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71iPoll Databank, [http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html).

72iPoll Databank, [http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html).
at first, but it actually relates quite directly to the war effort: the Red Cross at this time segregated donations – storing black blood separately from white blood – even during total war.\textsuperscript{73} Weights were constructed following Berinsky and Schickler’s approach.\textsuperscript{74}

These questions provide different vantage points on attitudinal change during the war. The good living and fair treatment involve respondents making an assessment of conditions. As such, their meaning is more ambiguous. The objective answer is “no,” but increases in the “yes” answer during the war might reflect a perception that things are getting better, if not equitable. The jobs question, by contrast, is normative. It does not ask whether the respondent thinks African Americans have the same chance as white people to get a job, but rather whether they should have the same chance or not. As such, only an increase in the “yes” answer should be interpreted as a growth of racial liberalism. The questions about blood, intelligence, and having a black nurse tap more into general prejudice. The blood question, in particular, is an extreme case that taps into forms of biological racism common in the day. Here, too, an increase in affirmative answers should be taken as evidence of growing liberalism.

Whites became slightly more likely to say African Americans should have the same chance at a job, rising from 38 percent to 45 percent. Northern support for equal opportunity increased from 46 percent to 52 percent; southern support increased from 15 percent to 25 percent. Whites also became slightly more likely to say black blood was the same, with the number increasing from 31 percent to 40 percent. The number saying it was different was effectively constant, moving from 35 percent to 33 percent. However, don’t know responses dropped from 34 percent to 28 percent. In the North, whites moved from 34 percent to 42 percent saying it was the same. In the South, whites moved from only 20 percent saying it was the same to 32 percent saying so. Finally, whites became more likely – moving from 45 to 54 percent – to say blacks were as intelligent as whites. However, this shift is almost entirely non-southern. In the South, 30 percent of whites said yes in 1944 compared to 31 percent in 1946. In the North, however, this number increased from 50


\textsuperscript{74}I calculate a 32-category eduWhites weight for the 1943 dataset. However, I am only able to calculate a 24-category eduWhites weight for the 1946 dataset, since I am unable to distinguish between whites who attended high school and whites who actually graduated (these two groups are thus lumped together).
percent in 1944 to 61 percent in 1946.

The percentage of whites who said they thought African Americans had the same chance as whites to make a good living was roughly constant from 1943 to 1944, increasing from 52 percent to 54 percent. If all extraneous responses – including don’t knows – are dropped, it does increase from 53 to 60 percent, but this likely overstates the shift. White assessments of whether African Americans were being treated fairly likewise remained constant from 1944 to 1946, at 63 percent in both years. The question about having a black nurse actually saw a slight decrease in support, from 50 percent of whites saying they would be okay with this in 1944 to 46 percent in 1946. This seems primarily driven by northern whites, where support dropped from 56 percent to 51 percent, while moving only from 32 percent to 30 percent in the South.

A comparison of rural southerners and urban residents in the Northeast also illuminates relevant subgroup differences. In many cases, the decreases in racial prejudice seem to reflect rural southern whites going from “extremely prejudiced” to “slightly less prejudiced.” While only 10 percent of whites in the most rural areas of the South expressed support for equal job opportunities in 1944, by 1946 this number had risen to 25 percent – a sizable increase percentage-wise, albeit still a minority viewpoint. Similarly, notions among this group of white southerners that black blood is biologically the same as white blood increased from 19 percent in 1944 to 38 percent in 1946. The changes in the urban Northeast were much smaller.

Overall, then, changes over time are mixed. There is some evidence of slight racial liberalization, but also a few null results and a potential conservative shift on the nurse question. There are, however, clear limitations to this analysis. Two data points are less than ideal, especially since there is no clear before and after. Having a prewar comparison case would be preferable. Fortunately, the two policy issues that follow are better in this regard.

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75 This could reasonably be seen as not a particularly valid measure of racial prejudice. Indeed, if the FEPC had even a slight impact, African Americans did have somewhat better job prospects during the war, although certainly not real equal opportunity in any meaningful sense.

I next turn to two policy areas with more available data points: anti-lynching legislation and abolition of the poll tax. I start with an assessment of changing white attitudes on federal intervention in state lynching cases. Lynching was raised as a national political issue by black civil rights organizations like the NAACP. Black legal figures like William Hastie and Thurgood Marshall kept pressing the issue during World War II, arguing that “[t]he recent outbreaks of mob violence again emphasize the fact that only Federal action will free us from lynchings and the threat of lynching.” Federal antilynching legislation was often proposed, but never successfully passed in the Senate (although it did pass in the House of Representatives). Such legislation was a challenge to Roosevelt’s congressional New Deal alliance. Roosevelt and his congressional supporters “tailored New Deal legislation to southern preferences,” according to Katznelson et al., trading maintenance of southern society’s status quo for southern support for New Deal economic legislation. This meant that not even “the most heinous aspects of regional repression, such as lynching, [could be] be brought under the rule of law.” Yet for many politicians outside the South, black migration meant “black political power was becoming an unavoidable reality.” Antilynching legislation soon became more than the sum of its parts, effectively serving as a symbol for racial conservatives of the meddling of northern liberals in the white South’s affairs.

To assess white attitudes towards federal anti-lynching legislation, I use Gallup questions about federal intervention in state lynching cases, which were asked before and after – although, interestingly, not during – the war. While Schickler discards the don’t know responses to create dichotomous response categories in his analysis of the prewar lynching questions, I leave the don’t know responses in to allow for a valid third category of uncertainty. As will be discussed momentarily, this helps to assess prewar and postwar shifts in the opposition category.

A word of caution is in order regarding question wordings. While the analysis presented here

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is consistent with evidence regarding the poll tax (which provides a useful robustness check, as there is no substantial variation in question wording there), Gallup’s questions about lynching are indicative of some of the weaknesses of early survey research. The questions can basically be divided into four groups. The first three questions, all from 1937, asked quite simply whether Congress should pass a law making lynching a federal crime. The next three questions, asked from 1937 to 1940, asked whether the Federal Government should have the authority to fine and imprison local authorities who do not protect against a lynch mob, which is a much more specific and severe description. In the postwar period, from 1947 to 1950, Gallup returns to a more general question, asking, with only very slight variations, something along the lines of, “At present, state governments deal with most crimes committed in their own state. In the case of a lynching do you think the Federal Government should have the right to step in and deal with the crime – or do you think this should be left entirely to the state government?” There is one outlier in the question wording, however. The 1947 question asks whether the federal government should be able to step in only “if the State Government doesn’t deal with it justly.” This concluding qualifier (“justly”) leaves much more room for interpretation, and possibly suggests a less all-encompassing policy. I consider this question a third category, and the remaining 1948-1950 questions without the qualifier as the fourth category.

Because of these differences in question wording, caution is needed in analyzing over-time trends. While the first (1937) and fourth (1948-1950) groups of questions share some similarities (they both ask whether the federal government should have authority over state lynching cases, without making reference to specific penalties), the 1937 questions do not refer directly to state action. And while the 1947 question is similar to the 1948-1950 questions in many ways, the ending to the question is much more ambiguous, perhaps suggesting a weaker policy (in turn opening up the possibility of more expressed support). This sort of limitation, however, is an inherent part of the data, and reflects the difficulties of working with surveys from this era. In conjunction with the prejudice questions and the other policy question about the poll tax I turn to momentarily, this section can still be of interest as part of a broader portrait of white racial attitudes during the World War II era. To better highlight variation in wording, I use different markers for different
categories of questions in the figures.

I divide opinion in each survey into support, opposition, and don’t know. I use the best possible survey weight to correct for the biases of the sampling procedure.\textsuperscript{79}

Figure 1 plots trends in support. For the first three time points in 1937, national white support for federal intervention ranges from 59 to 62 percent (the numbers are 59 to 67 percent in the North, compared to 38 to 53 percent in the South). For the next three, when phrasing about punishing local officials is introduced from November 1937 to January 1940, support ranges from 42 to 60 percent (46 to 60 percent in the North, compared to 29 to 58 percent in the South), with the highest figure coinciding with the most minimalist version of this style of question. Postwar, from February 1948 until January 1950 national white support for federal intervention ranges from 38 to 43 percent (42 to 47 percent in the North, compared to 23 to 27 percent in the South).\textsuperscript{80}

Precise causal inference is impossible to draw from such data. Yet a few general statements seem consistent with the evidence. The war certainly did not lead to increases in support for federal intervention in state lynching cases. If anything, there seems to have been an increase in racially conservative opposition. Figure 2 plots the percentage of whites that opposed federal intervention from 1937 until 1950. Before the war, opposition never rose above 43 percent overall, 40 percent in the North, and 56 percent in the South, while don’t know response were sometimes as high as 17-20 percent.\textsuperscript{81} By January 1950, however, opposition to federal intervention was up to 52 percent overall, including 45 percent in the North and 71 percent in the South. This seems to have been primarily the result of white indecision evolving into a hardened states’ rights position, although there appears to have been a slight drop-off in active support for federal intervention as well.

Comparing southerners in the most rural areas to northeastern residents in the most urban

\textsuperscript{79}For the postwar questions, this means calculating the eduWhites weight. However, the prewar surveys are more limited. Making the best of the available information, I use profWhites weights for the January 1937, November 1937, and January 1940 datasets; I use phoneBlack weights for the August 1937, October/November 1937, and December 1937 datasets. Weights for the prewar questions were previously computed by Schickler. I calculate the postwar weights myself. Differences in weights are necessitated by differences in available information in surveys from different time periods. However, it is unlikely this has a sizable effect, substantively. While the weighted figures are technically more accurate than unweighted ones, the substantive difference between them is generally small.

\textsuperscript{80}In 1947, 67 percent offered support when the question used the concluding qualifier.

\textsuperscript{81}And these prewar heights of opposition coincide with the more extreme question wording, which was dropped in the postwar period.
ones is again revealing, but in a slightly different manner than it was for measures of racial prejudice. In January 1940, 82 percent of whites in the most populous urban areas in the Northeast expressed support for a congressional anti-lynching bill. Between February 1948 and January 1950, support for federal intervention in state lynching cases ranged from 47 percent to 59 percent across five different surveys. For whites in the most rural southern areas, support stood at 27 percent in January 1940, then ranged from 14 percent to 21 percent in the five surveys conducted between February 1948 and January 1950. The decline in support, then, actually seems, if anything, especially concentrated in the urban Northeast, where support dropped from nearly universal to slightly majoritarian (and, in one case, just a plurality). However, there was less room for a decrease in southern opinion, since it was already much more opposed.

This does not mean the urban Northeast was not more supportive of civil rights liberalism – it was. However, it does highlight the extent to which liberalism was “limited” in this time period by mass preferences. Rather than being a window where policy attitudes could become more accommodating, the war seems to have solidified the prospect of such measures, and increased skepticism. Antilynching legislation was never enacted and eventually fell off the agenda.

There are several concerns to be addressed in interpreting these numbers. One possibility is that a genuine, if unmeasurable, wartime liberalization might have been reversed by developments in the latter half of the 1940s such as the Truman civil rights committee (established in December 1946 and report released in October 1947) or the Dixiecrat movement in 1948. A second possibility is that the lynching question came to represent something bigger than lynching, per se. Respondents could have sensed that perceived growths in black militancy during the war were increasing the prospect of other policy changes, with antilynching legislation serving as a precedent. Ultimately, these possibilities cannot be fully ruled out given the limitations of the available data. Whatever the interpretation, the trends in themselves can still serve as an important ref-

82 There do not seem to be any notable shifts related to the 1948 presidential campaign. If there was a decrease in support for federal antilynching legislation, it likely began earlier than this. However, the potentially confounding influence of the Truman civil rights committee is more difficult to assess. All of the postwar lynching questions discussed here were fielded after the committee’s report was released. The only postwar lynching question fielded before the report – albeit well after the committee’s establishment – was the June 1947 question that used the “justly” modifier in its phrasing. While expressed support for anti-lynching legislation was indeed higher here, it is not possible to assess whether this is related to the Truman committee, or merely the qualifier in the question wording resulting in higher levels of support.
reference point for accounts of the war and racial attitudes. At the very least, while acknowledging a potentially more complicated story, the racial liberalization argument does not seem consistent with the lynching data.

**Policy II: Abolition of the Poll Tax, 1940-1949**

The second policy issue that was especially salient prewar was the poll tax. To assess shifts in white attitudes on the poll tax, I use Gallup questions about whether the tax should be abolished. This question was asked once in 1940, then four more times in the late 1940s. Like the lynching questions, however, it was never asked during the war itself. The question wording, fortunately, was very similar over time. “Some Southern states require every voter to pay a poll tax amounting to about a dollar a year before they can vote,” the question began. The respondent is then asked whether they think “these poll taxes” should be “abolished” or “done away with” (the specific phrase at the end is the only part that varies over time). The prewar survey allowed respondents to distinguish between what they labeled “YES!” and “Yes” (also “NO!” and “No”), which is how they articulated preference intensity. However, the postwar surveyed simply offered “Yes” and “No” responses, so I collapse the 1940 survey into simple “YES!”/“Yes” and “NO!”/“No” to allow for comparison. All surveys also allowed the respondents to declare “no opinion,” which I again choose to keep in my analysis. The 1940 survey weights were constructed by Berinsky and Schickler, and I use their code to reproduce it (altering, however, their decision to drop respondents who offered no opinion on the poll tax question). For the postwar questions, I again construct my own “eduWhites” weights based on their method.

Figure 3 plots white support for abolishing the poll tax. There is no detectable change in attitudes toward the poll tax between 1940 and 1949. In December 1940 – a year before the United States entered the Second World War – national white attitudes stood at 61 percent wanting to overturn poll taxes, 27 percent wanting to keep them, and 12 percent not offering an opinion. In the South, 51 percent of whites supported getting rid of poll taxes, with 40 percent wanting to keep them and 9 percent not expressing an opinion. Jumping forward to the postwar questions, national white support ranged from 63 to 66 percent, and among white southerners it ranged
from 48 to 53 percent. Although there was not an increase in the racially conservative position, as there was in lynching, the poll tax evidence likewise does not support the racial liberalization hypothesis.

Again, there are some concerns regarding interpretation that merit consideration. The poll tax was a complicated issue in the context of 1940s racial politics. Poll tax opponents in the 1940s tried to frame the issue as a suffrage restriction that hurt poor whites. By focusing on the single issue of the poll tax, they hoped to separate the issue from the broader struggle for black voting rights. Roosevelt himself viewed reforming “Polltaxia” as part of his broader effort in the late 1930s to purge southern conservatives in his party, which was motivated by a range of issues beyond race. After the United States entered World War II, some advocates used the ideological logic of the war to compare the poll tax’s disenfranchisement with elections in fascist Europe. Insomuch as the poll tax was framed by political elites like Roosevelt and national advocacy organizations as a burden on poor whites, using it as a test of racial policy is a bit difficult. That said, it is certainly true that supporters of the poll tax in the South saw it as an important tool in maintaining white supremacy. Some non-southern liberal Democrats likewise described it in similar terms. Congressman Arthur Mitchell, for example, said abolishing the poll tax would “eventually aid in wiping out the disenfranchisement of Negroes…in the Southern states” (for him, a welcome development). Overall, it would be ill-advised to look only at the poll tax as a measure of racial policy liberalism. However, in conjunction with an analysis of antilynching legislation, which was always more explicitly racialized, looking at (non-)shifts in attitudes towards the poll tax helps fill in the broader picture. The absence of attitudinal change on the poll tax is not consistent with the racial liberalization hypothesis.

**Summary: Hypothesis I**

This section demonstrates that, for the most part, white attitudes were not broadly liberalized on race and civil rights as a result of World War II. There is some evidence of a slight decrease in certain (although not all) measures of white racial prejudice. However, this is counterbalanced by

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evidence that, if anything, white opposition to federal antilynching legislation actually increased. Although the slight shifts in prejudice should not be totally discounted, this section offers a clear rebuke to scholarship that has simply assumed the war had a liberalizing impact on white racial attitudes without analyzing the relevant data. This perspective – especially in its more declarative forms – is not supported by the available survey evidence.

It is possible, of course, that some attitudinal changes were not immediate. For example, there might have been a “World War II generation” that experienced the war during their “impressionable years” who came to hold different views on race later in life. This is difficult to identify, although the veterans section that follows provides one relevant vantage point on individuals whose impressionable years were defined by direct participation in the war.\textsuperscript{84} It is also worth considering what over-time trends might look like had questions been asked before and after the war about issues with more relevance to the North, like employment discrimination and housing policy. Several other issues also cannot be fully resolved, including sheer data limitations and possible variation in survey response during the decade. While acknowledging such limitations – which I further address in the Online Appendix – I argue the best account of the war’s impact on white racial attitudes must be consistent with the evidence that does exist.

**Results: Racial Liberalization Hypothesis for White Veterans**

This section addresses the second hypothesis, that white veterans of World War II were more racially liberal in the war’s aftermath than their non-veteran counterparts. Using two datasets from the earlier analysis of aggregate white racial prejudice, as well as a new dataset asking about military integration, I demonstrate white veterans were not less racially prejudiced in the war’s immediate aftermath. They were not distinguishable on general prejudice measures, and they were likewise not more willing to support an integrated military. They were, however, more likely to support federal anti-lynching legislation. Shifting focus to 1961 – and bringing in the

\textsuperscript{84}Schuman et al. emphasize this sort of generational change, but they do not identify a World War II cohort, per se. Rather, they identify a “pre-civil rights cohort,” which includes individuals who reached adulthood before 1953. Schuman et al., *Racial Attitudes in America*, 202. See also Danny Osborne, David O. Sears, and Nicholas A. Valentino, “The End of the Solidly Democratic South: The Impressionable-Years Hypothesis,” *Political Psychology* 31(1), 2011, 9-10.
white southern sample of the Negro Political Participation Study – I demonstrate white veterans in the South were not distinguishable on attitudes toward segregation, the sit-ins movement, and so on. However, they were more supportive of black voting rights than non-veterans.

**Postwar: Late 1940s**

This 1946 survey used earlier contains a wide range of questions about race and civil rights. Fortunately, it also identifies veteran status. For dependent variables, I use five of the anti-black prejudice questions from the last section (whether African Americans are being treated fairly, whether they should have the same chance at a job, whether black blood is biologically the same as white blood, whether blacks are as innately intelligent as whites, and whether the respondent would tolerate having a black nurse). Each variable is dichotomized so that discriminatory positions are 1 and more egalitarian positions are 0.

Results of a series of logistic regressions are presented in Table 1. Controlling for region, education, and age, World War II veterans were perhaps less likely to say white people should get the first chance at a job, but the marginal effect of 9 percentage points is only significant at the .10 level. This might be reasonable since $N=477$, but that’s a post-hoc analysis at best. Otherwise, there is no distinction between veterans and non-veterans on an array of issues.

I also examine attitudes toward an integrated military. In 1948, Gallup used a split form to ask slight variations on a question about military integration. Those receiving Form K of the survey were asked, “Would you favor or oppose having Negro and white troops throughout the U.S. Armed Services live and work together – or should they be separated as they are now?” Those receiving Form T were asked, “It has been suggested that white and colored men serve together throughout the U.S. Armed Services – that is, live and work in the same units. Do you think this is a good idea or a poor idea?” These variables are dichotomized so that 1 = opposition and 0 = support for integration.

I use logistic regression to estimate the relationship between opinion on military integration and World War II veteran status, controlling for region, education, and age. Results are presented in Table 2. There is no statistical relationship between being a veteran and attitudes toward mil-
itary integration. White veterans were not more supportive of serving side-by-side with black soldiers in 1948, nor were they more opposed. Service in the military seems to have had no effect. This result is consistent for both versions of the question.

Finally, some of the postwar lynching questions were part of surveys that asked about whether respondents served in World War II. Here, I examine a 1948 question asking respondents, “At present, state governments deal with most crimes committed in their own states. In the case of a lynching, do you think the United States (Federal) Government should have the right to step in and deal with the crime – or do you think this should be left entirely to the state government?”

This survey provides the strongest positive evidence supporting the hypothesis that white veterans were liberalized on race. Using a dichotomous version of the dependent variable (assessing preferences for leaving lynching cases to states vs. allowing the federal government to intervene), I use logistic regression to estimate the relationship between opinion on federal intervention in state lynching cases and World War II veteran status, controlling for region, education, and age. Results are presented in Table 3. The first model shows veteran status to have a statistically significant relationship with attitudes towards antilynching legislation. Calculating marginal effects, white veterans were 9 percent less likely to take the states’ rights position, relative to the federal intervention choice. Models 2-3 show this to be an entirely non-southern effect. If the model is estimated using only southern respondents, the veteran variable is not significant. However, if it is estimated using only non-southern respondents, the effect of military service is slightly larger than in the full model. The marginal effect is 10 percentage points in this case.

The Civil Rights Era: Early 1960s

While the immediate impact of service on racial attitudes is interesting, another prospect is the longer-term impact of military service on later racial attitudes, especially in the era when civil rights politics were most primed. This later analysis also allows me to relate this project more directly to Parker’s work on the attitudinal and behavioral impact of black veterans’ military service. Relying on the white sample of the 1961 Negro Political Participation Survey, I use the following questions as dependent variables: the respondent’s assessment of how many white people in the
South favor racial segregation; whether the respondent themselves favors “integration, strict segregation, or something in between”; their agreement with the statement, “[c]olored people ought to be allowed to vote”; assessment of the sit-in movement (“that is, some of the young colored people going into stores, and sitting down at lunch counters, and refusing to leave until they are served”); their agreement with the statement, “Demonstrations to protest integration of schools are a good idea, even if a few people have to get hurt”; whether they have ever “ever known a colored person well enough that you would talk to him as a friend”; and whether they agree that “colored people are all alike.”

I estimate regression models where opinion is a function of veteran status, as well as age and educational attainment. The sample is restricted to southern whites by default. As previously noted, I also restrict it to those men between the ages of 38 and 65. For dependent variables with multiple, ordered response categories, I estimate ordered probit models. For the dichotomous question about friendship – as well as an alternate coding of the sit-ins variable – I use logistic regression. To aid in interpretation, I calculate changes in probabilities for theoretically relevant shifts, as well as the average change, for the veteran variable in the ordered probit models. I also calculate the marginal effect of moving from 0 to 1 on the veteran variable (i.e., moving from not being a veteran to being a veteran) for the logistic regression models.

Results are presented in Tables 4-5. The strongest support for the racial liberalization hypothesis is found in the model assessing attitudes on black voting rights. However, it is largely in preference intensity, rather than sheer differences of opinion. Southern whites with military backgrounds were 21 percent more likely than those without military backgrounds to offer strong support, relative to the weaker support option. However, the other categorical shifts are much smaller. The overall average change associated with military service was 11 percentage points, which is highly skewed due to the 21 percentage point difference between strong and weak support. For this issue, at least, there is support for the racial liberalization hypothesis.85

85Looking at bivariate cross-tabulations is informative here because they are nearly unanimous. Among the 58 male veterans in the 38-65 age group, 49 “agree[d] quite a bit” that African Americans should be able to vote (84 percent). Another 6 “agree[d] a little.” One respondent in this group “disagree[d] a little and one other respondent “disagree[d] quite a bit.” A final respondent offered a “don’t know” response. Among men in this age group who were not veterans, 60 percent “agree[d] quite a bit,” while another 22 percent “agree[d] a little.” Thirteen percent of these non-veterans “disagree[d] quite a bit.”
White veterans were also 19 percent more likely than non-veterans to say they had a black friend. This is the second piece of evidence supporting the racial liberalization hypothesis. Although the “black friend” trope is a cliche one, it lends some support to the idea that white veterans’ relative moderation, at least on some issues, was partly fueled by contact.

However, there is no difference whatsoever between veterans and non-veterans on assessments of the black sit-in protests or general attitudes toward segregation. This is a clear rebuke of the racial liberalization hypothesis. Segregation was at the core of the southern racial status quo, and military service seems to have had no moderating effect on how southern white men felt about the issue. Similarly, the sit-in movement was a critical aspect of the 1960s civil rights movement, and military service likewise seems to have had no impact on white assessments of it.\(^{86}\)

**Summary: Hypothesis II**

This section provides evidence that white veterans’ military service corresponded with more moderate racial attitudes on some issues, but not others. White veterans overall were less likely to oppose federal intervention in state lynching cases in 1948, although this seems to have been concentrated among non-southerners. White veterans in the South offered stronger support for black voting rights in 1961. However, they did not evince less racial prejudice than non-veterans in the war’s immediate aftermath, and by 1961 southern white veterans were not distinguishable from white southerners as a whole on questions of segregation. On the one hand, then, veterans seem to have liberalized on at least some of these more difficult questions of policy, where it was not the case for the white mass public as a whole. On the other hand, this moderation did not extend to broader claims about racial integration. The white veterans analyzed in the 1960s were just as

\(^{86}\)It is possible there is variation between the Peripheral and Deep South states. The Peripheral South can be defined as Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia, while the Deep South can be defined as Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. This definition is used by many standard texts in southern politics, including V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006 [1949]); Earl Black and Merle Black, *Politics and Society in the South*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987). Unfortunately, it is difficult to definitely assess such a distinction, since the number of observations in the Deep South is quite small by the conventions of survey research. The N of 142 for the black voting model, for instance, can be broken down into 107 Peripheral South respondents and 35 Deep South respondents. The sample is restricted due to the focus on men in the appropriate age range.
supportive of Jim Crow segregation as southern whites who did not serve, and they were not any more sympathetic to the sit-in movement.

Mechanisms are difficult to tease out. The exposure to more egalitarian cultures argument is a theoretically appealing one, but it is difficult to empirically test given the available data. Another possibility is the contact hypothesis, as white veterans in the South in 1961 were much more likely to report they had a black friend than non-veterans. Of course, the war’s effects on contact between black men and white men was complex. On the homefront, black soldiers stationed in southern training centers came into contact with non-military whites. They also were more likely to work together in the defense industry than they had been before the war. This increased contact certainly did not lead easily to toleration and integration, as race riots and smaller incidents of racial violence on the homefront make clear. While the exact mechanism is difficult to fully identify, these results nonetheless contribute to scholarly accounts of the war’s effects on American racial politics, and complement research about the effects of military service on black veterans.

Conclusion

Claims about World War II’s impact on white racial attitudes are widespread, yet they are systematically made without reference to public opinion data that might allow for an examination of such claims. This paper provides an empirical baseline for future claims to draw from. First, I demonstrate that while there is some evidence of slight shifts in racial prejudice, the war did not liberalize white attitudes toward racially egalitarian policies. This is especially true for antilynching legislation, where opposition actually seems to have grown. Second, the more specific case

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87 Surveys that identify veteran status and provide a non-veteran comparison group do not usually go beyond a veteran/non-veteran distinction. In particular, they do not identify where the individual served.

88 The interpretation here is not so straight-forward, however. If the friend variable is used as a predictor instead of the veteran variable, it is also statistically significant. If veteran is used but the sample is further restricted to only those with black friends, veteran status is no longer significant. However, if veteran is used but the sample is restricted to only those without black friends, veteran status is significant, suggesting the war had some other effect than mere contact. These results are available in the Online Appendix. For a recent analysis trying to assess the causal effect of the contact hypothesis in a (contemporary) military setting, see Scott E. Carrell, Mark Hoekstra, and James E. West, “The Impact of Intergroup Contact on Racial Attitudes and Revealed Preferences,” NBER Working Paper 20940, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, MA, 2015.

89 Kryder, Divided Arsenal. Historians of housing politics have likewise demonstrated intense anti-black sentiments among white urban residents who came into contact with growing black populations. See, for example, Arnold Hirsch, Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
of veterans is somewhat more complex. White veterans were not distinguishable on a range of racial attitudes, but they were more likely to support federal anti-lynching legislation in 1948, and offered stronger support for black voting rights by 1961.

These results provide one vantage point on the war’s effects on American racial politics, and the politics of civil rights in the 1940s more broadly. While this paper has focused on the ideological aspects of the war, the massive material undertaking of wartime had other important political-economic implications for race and civil rights politics. The creation of jobs in the defense industry helped propel migration out of the South into urban areas in other parts of the country. Mobilization of these new potential voters led to new forms of political influence in important swing states.\(^{90}\) Perhaps the most direct policy impact of the war was President Roosevelt’s FEPC executive order, which was issued almost entirely in response to a threatened March on Washington by A. Philip Randolph and others.\(^ {91}\) While the wartime FEPC was often viewed as weak in its enforcement powers, Chen argues the effort to save the wartime FEPC “served as a catalyst for grass-roots mobilization” and “spurred a wider range of liberal interest groups to collaborate more closely with each other – in the name of civil rights – than ever before in the twentieth century.” The wartime experience with FEPC led to “a specific regulatory ideal and concrete legislative program” for the immediate postwar period.\(^ {92}\)

This was partly enabled by an alliance formed on the eve of the war between the NAACP and the CIO. NAACP membership increased nearly ten-fold during the war.\(^ {93}\) This, in conjunction with the developing relationship between the NAACP and labor, had important impli-

\(^ {90}\) This was often articulated as African Americans holding the “balance of power.” See Henry Lee Moon, *The Balance of Power: The Negro Vote*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948. It also finds expression in the influential Rowe memorandum urging Truman to ignore southern whites and emphasize the mobilization of black northern voters. “Unless there are new and real efforts (as distinguished from mere political gestures which are today thoroughly understood and strongly resented by sophisticated Negro leaders) the Negro bloc, which, certainly in Illinois and probably in New York and Ohio, does hold the balance of power, will go Republican,” Rowe wrote Truman. The memorandum is available online at “Oral History Interview with James H. Rowe,” Appendix B, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/rowejhap.htm#appb


tions for civil rights politics. Christopher Baylor contrasts this alliance with the National Urban League, which allied itself with business, particularly in terms of its donor base. Counterfactually, had the NAACP allied with business instead of labor, Baylor argues the push for FEPC – which the NAACP came to view as the most important issues on the agenda – would have been even more difficult.94 This, in turn, had implications for party politics. When the NAACP and CIO advocated for a permanent FEPC over other goals, including the desegregation of the military, “[w]hatever lingering relationship remained between African Americans and the Republican Party was strained” because the GOP considered the FEPC to be “the most unpalatable civil rights proposal on the NAACP’s agenda.”95 Changes of this sort do not directly involve changes in aggregate white racial attitudes, and as such are a different avenue through which the war might have affected race and civil rights politics.

Other scholars have written about this era as the moment when northern Democrats starting becoming more racially liberal than northern Republicans. Feinstein and Schickler, for example, offer a compelling critique of Carmines and Stimson’s model of the civil rights realignment by pushing the timing of this partisan shift back to the mid-1940s. Non-southern state Democratic parties, they argue, were becoming more racially liberal than their Republican counterparts by this time period. They focus on two domestic mechanisms through which the Democratic Party gradually adopted more racially liberal policies than Republicans: (1) critical constituents in the Democratic coalition, like Jews and CIO members, were more predisposed toward civil rights liberalism than the business-oriented constituents of the Republican Party; and (2) the “ideological logic of the New Deal itself,” by which they mean the movement of the party towards a rights-based focus in conjunction with a willingness to use the federal government to intervene in society.96 If the war did not lead to a liberalization of white attitudes, what accounts for this? One possibility is that the connection between economic liberalism and racial liberalism was being cemented at this time, regardless of the nature of aggregate attitudinal shifts.97 It is also possible that

95Ibid., 129.
the views and incentives of state party activists were influenced by the war, either ideologically (e.g., idiosyncratic responses to the war by important actors, whose decisions had institutional implications) or in more material ways (e.g., black migration created pressures). The latter is almost certainly true, while the former would be more difficult to pin down. To what extent were non-southern state party activists in agreement with Rabbi Aryeh Lev’s declaration to the 1948 Democratic National Convention, “We have learned a measure of unity on the battlefield where all under the same banner, white men and black men...have fought and died side by side. Now that we are at peace, we must learn to live side by side”? While individual comments like this are interesting, a more systematic analysis of the archival record would be necessary to assess this.

These results can also be connected to the presidential politics of civil rights at the time. The growth in white opposition to federal anti-lynching legislation, particularly insomuch as it came from indecision shifting into such opposition, might well be a response to fears the Double-V rhetoric of civil rights organizations was successful. This was something the White House sensed as well. For example, in a November 25, 1942, memo to the President from Jonathan Daniels about the FEPC investigation of the Capital Transit Company, Daniels wrote that the move is helping to “create Southern fears that the government may be moving to end Jim Crow laws in transportation in the South under the guise of the war effort.” Growing white southern opposition to federal anti-lynching legislation might be similarly motivated.

The finding that veterans were more likely to oppose the extremes of white supremacist violence and the most blatant form of democratic exclusion (yet offer similar levels of support as

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99Memorandum, Jonathan Daniels to Franklin Roosevelt, November 25, 1942; Folder: “Colored Matters (Negroes) [in Box 5]”; OF 93; Franklin D. Roosevelt President’s Official Files, 1933-1945; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY.

100In comparison to civil rights advocates’ Double-V campaign, Jason Morgan Ward describes how “defenders of segregation articulated their own vision of Double Victory. Championing white supremacy and demanding freedom from outside interference, Southern conservatives deemed civil rights agitation and federal encroachment to be as dangerous as an Axis invasion. The white South, like African Americans, had entered the war fighting on two fronts.” He later describes this effort as “[m]ore than an elite rhetorical strategy but less than an authentic grassroots rebellion.” Jason Morgan Ward, “‘A War for States’ Rights”: The White Supremacist Vision of Double Victory,” in Fog of War: The Second World War and the Civil Rights Movement ed. Kevin M. Kruse and Stephen Tuck, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 127, 140.
non-veterans for a maintenance of the racial status quo in other ways) is in many ways similar to the story of President Truman’s evolving civil rights positions. Privately, Truman was born into a very culturally southern part of Missouri, and he casually used racial slurs throughout his life. However, Truman’s service in the First World War was a critical moment in his life, and he developed a particular concern with the treatment of soldiers. When he saw evidence of black veterans returning home only to be beaten by police – particularly the blinding of Sergeant Isaac Woodard in South Carolina by an officer’s billy club – he was personally affected in a way Roosevelt never would have been. Such emotional reactions did not lead him to support desegregation and the civil rights movement more broadly. Indeed, later in life he would come to view the 1960s movement as unruly and possibly Communist in nature. However, it did at least press him at the margins to say soldiers deserved better than mob violence. It is quite possible that at least some white veterans of the Second World War had a similar understanding.

The World War II era, of course, eventually shifts into the Cold War era, which has a race and civil rights literature of its own. Mary Dudziak demonstrates how the Cold War would “simultaneously constrain and enhance civil rights reform,” as well as “frame and thereby limit the nation’s civil rights commitment.” Carol Anderson acknowledges this “half-hearted, but necessary, response to black inequality,” but argues it also “systematically eliminated human rights as a viable option for mainstream African American leadership.” Accounts of World War II and civil rights have differed in their emphasis on the compelling vs. constraining natures of the war. Philip Klinkner and Rogres Smith, for example, offer a more positive case: the war contained the necessary conditions for progress on civil rights. Others, like Daniel Kryder, emphasize the national state’s efforts at maintaining order, which sometimes led to racially egalitarian out-

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101 David McCullough, *Truman*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992); see also Klinkner and Smith, *The Unsteady March*.  
102 McCullough, *Truman*, 971-72  
103 Of course, not all white veterans felt this way. See Brooks, *Defining the Peace*. Indeed, many ardent white supremacists had served in the war and saw no tension between their service in a war against Nazism and their defense of white supremacy. Robert “Tut” Patterson, leader of the White Citizens’ Councils, was a World War II veteran. James C. Cobb, *The South and America Since World War II*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 35.  
106 Klinkner and Smith, *The Unsteady March*.  

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comes (the wartime FEPC) and other times led to racially inegalitarian outcomes (segregation in the military).\textsuperscript{107} Further distinguishing the World War II era from the Cold War era – and more systematically distinguishing the ways in which the war was “good” or “bad” for civil rights – merits further analysis.\textsuperscript{108}

Understanding the impact of war on white racial attitudes is a part of this broader story. This paper illustrates how the complicated mix of continuity (e.g., attitudes toward the poll tax), liberalization (e.g., white veterans’ opposition to lynching), and rightward shifts (e.g., aggregate white attitudes toward federal anti-lynching legislation) complicates popular assumptions about the war’s impact. In conjunction with a careful analysis of the war’s impact on political institutions, this paper can help clarify the complicated role played by the Second World War in shaping twentieth century racial politics in the United States.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{107}Kryder, \textit{Divided Arsenal}.
\textsuperscript{109}This argument is articulated in much greater detail in a larger, book-length project.
Figure 1: White Support for Federal Antilynching Legislation, 1937-1950
Figure 2: White Opposition to Federal Antilynching Legislation, 1937-1950
Figure 3: White Support for Abolishing the Poll Tax, 1940-1949
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Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
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<td>.10</td>
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Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Table 3: Lynching, 1948

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<th></th>
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<th>South</th>
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<td>-0.41*</td>
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<td>(0.18)</td>
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<td>(0.56)</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>-0.51</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.67)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.08</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.25)</td>
<td>(0.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
</tr>
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<td>(0.52)</td>
<td>(1.62)</td>
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<table>
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<th>North</th>
<th>South</th>
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Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$
Table 4: Negro Political Participation Study White Sample, Logit Models, 1961

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<th></th>
<th>Sit-ins</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>0.89( ^* )</td>
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<td>(0.42)</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>(0.75)</td>
<td>(0.56)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HS Grad</td>
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<td>0.21</td>
<td>(0.77)</td>
<td>(0.60)</td>
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<td>(0.77)</td>
<td>(0.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.33( ^* )</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td>(1.66)</td>
<td>(1.37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
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<td>144</td>
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Note: Southern sample
Standard errors in parentheses
\( ^* p < 0.05, ^*^* p < 0.01, ^*^*^* p < 0.001 \)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Veteran</th>
<th>Segregation 1</th>
<th>Segregation 2</th>
<th>Black Voting</th>
<th>Sit-ins</th>
<th>Anti-Inegration</th>
<th>All Alike</th>
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<td>-0.00</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
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<td>(0.01)</td>
<td>(0.02)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.36)</td>
<td>(0.35)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS Grad</td>
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<td>0.07</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.37)</td>
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<td>(0.38)</td>
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<td>-0.38</td>
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<td>1.07**</td>
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<td>(0.37)</td>
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<td>(0.35)</td>
<td>(0.55)</td>
<td>(0.52)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>(0.76)</td>
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<tr>
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</table>

Note: Southern sample. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$