SOUTHERN IDENTITY: THE MEANING, PRACTICE, AND IMPORTANCE OF A REGIONAL IDENTITY

By

Ashley Blaise Thompson

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Approved:

Professor Larry J. Griffin

Professor Gary F. Jensen

Professor George Becker

Professor David L. Carlton

Professor Peggy A. Thoits

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Drawing from the European tradition of social identity theory and using in-depth interviews, my dissertation explores the meaning, importance, and practice of southern identity. With very few exceptions, such as the work of John Shelton Reed, sociologists and social psychologists have largely ignored the study of regional identities, such as southern identity, focusing instead on ethnic, racial, gender, and other social identities. Historians and cultural analysts of various sorts have extensively studied southerners and southern identity through the examination of the region's history and cultural productions (e.g. - novels, autobiographies, and media representations); however, virtually none of this scholarship delves into how contemporary southerners think about and apprehend their regional identities. Existing research does suggest three specific (and sometimes overlapping) ways in which southern identity has been experienced by the region's residents: as a stigmatized identity, as a racial identity, and as an ethnic or quasi-ethnic identity. My intent is to incorporate these insights from historians and cultural analysts with insights from social identity theory, as explicated by Tajfel and Turner, to examine why and how racially and socioeconomically diverse people living in the South understand, make sense of, and act on their regional identities as southerners.

The following are some of the specific questions I will address: (i) Do residents of the geographic South consider themselves to be southerners? (ii) What do they mean

when they say they are southerners, and why do they choose (or choose not) to self-identify in regional terms? (iii) Do they view the identity as stigmatized, and if so, why would they deliberately choose to define themselves as a member of a stigmatized group? (iv) Does their subjective and behavioral experience of "southernness" suggest that they see themselves as "ethnics" in a meaningful way? (v) Do southern African Americans define themselves by reference to region? If so, why is this the case, considering that the identity has been historically associated with and defined by whites? (vi) How do individuals "practice" southern identity? (vii) How is the identity passed along to future generations?

The primary source of data for this dissertation comes from in-depth interviews with black and white southerners of different social classes. This dissertation contributes to the ever growing field of social identity theory by studying a "real world" social identity -- that of southerner -- of personal significance to those I study and undoubted historical significance to American history and culture. The study also adds to the extensive literature in southern studies because it is one of the few studies to examine the issue of southern identity through in-depth interviews with southerners themselves.

Identity and Meaning

In recent decades, the study of identity has come to occupy a central role in the work of sociologists and social psychologists (Cerulo 1997; Howard 2000; Huddy 2001). Whereas in the past research on identity focused on the individual level (Ellemers et al. 2002), much contemporary work examines identity in terms of membership in social groups (Cerulo 1997). The development of social identity theory by social psychologists

Henri Tajfel and John Turner (Tajfel 1978; Tajfel and Turner 1986) contributed to the shift from the study of individual-level identities to group-level identities (Taylor and Moghaddam 1994; Huddy 2001). While social identity theory has illuminated the importance of identities based on group membership, it has been criticized for ignoring the subjective meaning of identities for group members. Huddy (2001), for example, argues that social identity researchers have paid "considerable attention to the existence of simple group boundaries while ignoring their internal meaning" (2001:130). The meanings people attach to social identities matter for the perceived social status and self-esteem of individual members of a group, for group members' attitudes toward other groups, and for collective and political action.

According to social identity theory, as explicated by Tajfel (1978), humans tend to categorize and order the social world into groups, which are differentially valued. For Tajfel, group memberships have consequences for individuals' "social identity," defined as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of membership in a social group or groups together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978:63). Thus for Tajfel, individuals are motivated to differentiate their groups positively from other groups in order to achieve a positive social identity, thereby enhancing individual self-esteem and value. Identities based on group membership also help individuals to situate themselves in the social status hierarchy of a particular society. Tajfel (1978) asserts that the value and status of a particular group membership are premised on social comparisons with other salient groups. Perceived differences from other groups and the value connotations associated with these differences allow for the evaluation of one's own group status.

Social identity researchers have often relied on minimal group experiments to test the tenents of social identity theory. These groups lack the context, history, and level of commitment of groups in the real world (Huddy 2001; Ellemers 2002). Researchers need to examine identities and the meanings attached to these identities in real world settings to understand the impact of social group membership on self-esteem and the interpretation of one's social status.

Social identities are theorized to shape attitudes toward other groups as well. In his minimal group experiments, Tajfel (1978) found that individuals will identify with a group and favor their own in-group, even when minimal and arbitrary criteria of group membership are imposed on subjects. Tajfel and Turner (1986) conclude, based on Tajfel's experiments and the work of others, that "the mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups… is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination favoring the in-group" (1986:13). Intergroup comparisons are therefore theorized to affect such processes as stereotyping, discrimination, and group conflict (Griffin 2006b). Unfortunately, Tajfel and Turner fail to elaborate upon which groups may be used for comparison in particular situations beyond the notion that they must be relevant or salient on meaningful dimensions. By understanding the meaning of identities to those who hold them, we can better grasp why particular groups are used for comparisons, the meaningful dimensions for comparison for a particular group, and how intergroup hostility is created.

Social identity theory has been criticized for failing to address the acquisition and development of identities (Huddy 2001) and for testing its premises based on trivial, arbitrary, and temporary identities that generate low group commitment (in the minimal

group experiments; Ellemers et al. 2002). Further, Tajfel and Turner's use of the minimal group design for testing their theories relies on the imposition of identities on individuals who are assigned to groups; that is, to be a member of a group necessarily is to possess that group identity. Waters (1990), Huddy (2001), and Griffin (2006b) point out that in modern society a shift has occurred in which identities are more often a matter of choice or volition than imposition. Studying the meaning of identities is key to understanding the processes by which individuals might choose to adopt a particular identity (Huddy 2001). By moving outside of the experimental setting to examine identities actually held by subjects in the social world, we can get a fuller appreciation for the development and transmutations of identities that occur as group members seek a positive social identity.

The quest for a positive social identity also has implications for collective and political action. When members of a group make comparisons to other groups, these comparisons may result in either positive or negative evaluations of the group's status relative to comparison groups (Tajfel 1978). Tajfel and Turner (1986) outline several strategies available to members of groups that evaluate themselves negatively in relation to relevant out-groups, including individual social mobility (i.e., leaving the identity), social creativity (for example, defining new dimensions of comparison on which the group may be evaluated more favorably), and social competition with the out-group to change the in-group's status. Both social creativity and social competition are group-level strategies of collective action that imply either the altering of the meaning of a group's identity or the changing of the social structure to enhance the group's standing. Social movements may form as group members seek to transmute the meaning of

negative identities into positive social identities (see for instance Britt and Heise 2000; Polletta and Jasper 2001). Groups that positively evaluate their standing in relation to other groups may also experience threats to their social identity when lower-status groups seek to challenge their position, resulting in collective action on the part of the dominant group to maintain its social status (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). In sum, contests over the status and meaning of social identities, encouraged by the process of intergroup comparisons, can lead to collective and political action.

Social identity theory draws attention to the impact of group memberships on self esteem, perceived social status, attitudes toward other groups, and collective action. Yet social identity theory underemphasizes the necessity of understanding the meaning attached to group identities in the real world and the impact of internal meaning on these processes. As suggested by Ellemers et al. (2002), identities have a context, a history. For this reason, we must study identities outside of the experimental setting. Southern identity, associated with a region and place mired with conflict, tying those who claim the identity to a past and pushing them into the future, offers an excellent case for the examination of social identity and meaning.

Southern Identity and Meaning

The American South and its people have long been characterized as distinct and "exceptional" (see for example Woodward 1960; Reed 1972; Griffin 2000; but see also Carlton (1995) who insightfully problematizes this notion of southern "exceptionalism"). The South, particularly the white South, was unique in its long commitment to slavery and racial oppression, and in its resistance to the dismantling of the system of Jim Crow

(Griffin 1995). More generally, the South was exceptional in its "poverty, cultural backwardness, and religiosity" (Griffin 2006b). The South also developed its own distinct culture with its own food practices, music, traditions, and celebrations. The myriad of meanings attached to southern identity, both positive and negative, the distinctive history of the South, and the complex nature of race relations in the region all offer fruitful material for the examination of social identity that usefully complicates Tajfel and Turner's (1986) articulation of social identity theory. Specifically, the study of the meaning of a regional identity, such as southern identity, (i) complicates the relationship between imposed and volitional identities, (ii) allows for the understanding of the development, acquisition, and transmission of social identities, often neglected in social identity research (Huddy 2001), (iii) problematizes the assertion by social identity theorists that individuals are motivated to claim social identities in order to achieve a positive sense of esteem or value, (iv) underscores the importance of incorporating such factors as race, history, and collective memory into the examination of social identities, and (v) provides a real world context in which to examine the implications of the meaning of social identities on attitudes towards other groups and collective and political action. These issues are discussed in more detail below.

Much empirical testing of social identity theory has involved identities that are imposed upon group members in the minimal group experiments. In the case of southern identity, people from outside the region have imposed certain images on the South and southerners that articulate the region and its people as stigmatized and deviant, as a social problem (Killian 1970; Griffin 1995). Southerners have been portrayed in the larger culture as racist (Ayers 1996; Griffin and Thompson 2002), backwards, poor, illiterate,

anti-modern (Ayers 1996), defeated and guilty (Woodward 1960). As Cobb (1999a) points out, these imposed definitions also give southerners a color: white. If southern identity is simply a matter of imposition, then the tenents of social identity theory may apply to white southerners, who, once categorized as southerners, may feel positive affect towards the group, or seek to change the meanings attached to the group to achieve a positive social identity. But what about black southerners? Social identity theory does not seem to adequately explain why black southerners claim the southern identity in equal or greater numbers than white southerners (Griffin and Thompson 2002), if the imposed definition of a southerner is white[1].

As Huddy (2001) points out, social identity theory does not adequately deal with the issue of individual volition in identity claims, nor with the development and acquisition of identities. She argued that we can understand these phenomenon by focusing on the meaning of identities. In terms of the South, there is evidence from survey data that southern identity is not solely a matter of imposition or ascription, but is also characterized by a large degree of volition or choice (Griffin 2006). Therefore, identification as a southerner is not only based on such ascriptive factors as residence in the South, birth in the region, or having a southern accent, but also on such things as attachment or closeness to other southerners, appreciation of southern culture, and feeling that the South is a positive and distinct region. Data gathered through in-depth interviews are necessary to flesh out these issues. Through in-depth interviews with residents of the South we can explore why individuals claim a southern identity, perceptions of the South and southerners, the effect of impositional definitions of

[1] See, however, a recent article by Griffin (2006b) where he uses survey data to explore the identity claims of African Americans in the South.

southerners on the acceptance or rejection of a southern identity, generational transmission of southern identity, and exactly who is thought to be able to claim a southern identity.

If claiming a southern identity is a matter of choice, at least in part, then Tafjel's (1978) argument that individuals are motivated to achieve positive social identities, which are theorized to contribute to a sense of positive self-esteem for group members, is less straightforward than first thought. Based on Tajfel's theory, one would assume that those who embrace a southern identity are motivated to claim the identity because it somehow acts as a positive source of esteem. This notion seems paradoxical in light of the fact that, as noted above, southern identity has often been conceptualized as a negative or stigmatized identity. In light of these characterizations of the South, and primarily of white southerners, one must ask, why do southerners still claim a southern identity? Griffin et al. (2005) studied the Southern Focus Polls (a poll administered by the University of North Carolina from 1992 until 2001 using representative samples of southerners) and found that, though rates of identification with the South have declined over the years examined, 70 percent or more of the region's residents who were polled continued to identify themselves as southerners. It would seem counterintuitive that the vast majority of geographic southerners would continue to identify themselves as southerners if they perceived the identity to have the negative connotations mentioned previously. Therefore, we need to understand the meaning that southerners give to the identity in order to help understand why it is still claimed by so many.

Studying the meaning of southern identity also links history, and specifically the history of racial/ethnic conflict, to identity studies. As noted, in the eyes of many,

southern identity had a color, white. U.B. Phillips, in his now famous essay "The Central Theme of Southern History" (1928), declared that the South "shall be and remain a white man's country" and that this consciousness was "the cardinal test of a Southerner and the central theme of Southern history" (1928:31). We do not know if in today's South, in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement, the term southerner is still racialized to mean "white southerner," and this is another issue which a deeper understanding of the identity may illuminate. We do know that roughly 70% or more of African Americans in the South from the 1970s to the present claim to be southern (Griffin et al. 2005). Largely absent from our understanding of southern identity is knowledge of how black southerners perceive the identity. The history of white racial oppression in the region may lead to the rejection of southern identity by blacks. It is also plausible that racial oppression of the past has lead to negative views of white southerners by African Americans in the region. Social identity theory fails to account for the impact of the historical development of identities in the operation of social identities, an area which southern identity is particularly useful in exploring.

Southern identity and its meanings have also been bound up with political and collective action in the South. White resistance to the abolition of the plantation system of slavery and to the dismantling of Jim Crow was linked to the desire to preserve the "southern" way of life, that is, the white southern way of life (Coski 2000). The dismantling of Jim Crow has now opened the path for black southerners to claim a southern identity, which they do (Black and Black 1987, Griffin et al. 2005). Thus in the contemporary South we see collective action on the part of black southerners, liberal whites, and more business-oriented whites to change the symbolic landscape of the

South, such as the struggles to end the display of the Confederate flag over state capitals and to change state flags which incorporate the Confederate battle flag. These struggles are over the meaning of southern identity, who has the right to define the past and in what manner, and the desire to create a more inclusive definition of what it means to be a southerner (Levinson 1998; Cobb 1999b; Wilson 1999). Studying southern identity provides a unique opportunity to examine an identity in flux, that is fluid and changing, yet to be defined in light of historical changes (Griffin 2006). Further, the study of the meaning of southern identity of necessity incorporates the notion of collective memory into identity studies, an area neglected in social identity research. How the South is remembered and constructed impacts articulations of southern identity, particularly for blacks and whites, in the present, and is at the root of contemporary contestations and collective actions concerning the meaning of southern identity.

The meaning of southern identity has been and remains a site of conflict. In the past, southern identity was used by white southerners to defend a way of life grounded in racial exploitation and oppression. In the contemporary South, we see white southerners and black southerners struggling over the meaning of symbols and hence over the interpretation and validation of different pasts. Through this struggle, both white and black southerners seek a grounding for their identity in a sense of place and history. During this period of change, it becomes all the more important to take a closer look at the meaning of southern identity. Further, through an examination of southern identity, we can explore and elaborate upon aspects of social identity theory, noted above, that remain obscure due to a relative lack of studies using real-world identities.

Before discussing my study of the meaning of southern identity, it is useful to briefly examine how other scholars have approached the study of southern identity.

Approaches to the Study of Southern Identity

The literature on the South and the people that live in the region is prolific. Those who have analyzed the South usually turn, one way or another, to southern identity and have utilized several different methods for approaching their subject. These methods may be grouped into four distinct, yet often interrelated, epistemological approaches: the historical, social constructionist, literary, and social-psychological. Each of these approaches can inform and enrich our understanding of southern identity. However, as I will show, the social psychological approach has been under-utilized in the study of southern identity and is necessary to help fill in significant gaps in our understanding of the identity that are not adequately addressed using the other epistemological methods.

Historical Approaches

Historians, such as Phillips (1928), Cash (1941), Woodward (1960), Degler (1977), Ayers (1996), and Cobb (1999b), and a few sociologists, such as Killian (1970), have looked to the South's past in an effort to understand the identity of southerners. They examine the objective events that have transpired in this region and the collective experiences of southerners, especially white southerners, in order to grasp the roots of the distinctiveness of southerners as a people. Using historical records, memoirs, writings of contemporary southerners, political speeches, and newspaper accounts, historians interpret the meaning of the region and the identity of its people. By looking at some of

the key historians of the region, we can see that the meaning historians give to southern identity has changed over time with the progression of historical events in the South.

Early historians of the South often used the term "southerner" to refer to "white southerners," while black southerners were simply seen as "black" (Phillips 1928; Cash 1941; Cobb 1999a). In other words, black southerners were not truly seen as being "southern."[2] In 1928, U.B. Phillips articulated southern identity as resting on the desire to keep the South a "white man's country" (1928:31). According to Phillips, this desire to maintain white supremacy and to control the large population of blacks residing in the region is the essence of southern history. Writing roughly a decade later, W.J. Cash (1941) analyzed the history of the South from the antebellum to the days just prior to the Second World War and came to a similar conclusion; southern identity, or in this case the southern "mind," was associated with whiteness. In his now famous book, *The Mind of the South*, Cash agonized over what he viewed as the essentially dysfunctional southern mind, one colored by an obsession with race, extreme individualism, a tendency towards violence, and hostility to criticism and progress. This mind was rooted in the Old South and the agricultural conditions of the past, which created the values and attitudes that still defined contemporary southerners -- implicitly white southerners. Though Cash has been criticized for focusing on the "mind" of whites, and essentially of men, he did draw attention to the problems of the region and exposed the myth of the "New South" (Cobb 1999a).

The tradition of examining southern identity by focusing on the history of white southerners has continued in the work of Killian (1970). In his book, *White Southerners*,

[2] Cobb notes that many contemporary historians continue this practice of equating southernness with being white.

Killian examines the social psychology of white southerners as a sociological minority or quasi-minority group. Though Killian is a sociologist, his analysis is premised on an examination of what he terms social history and utilizes the historical method. For Killian, the key to white southern identity lies in the perception of white southerners that they are a minority group, premised upon their defensive reactions throughout much of their history to outside intervention into the affairs of their group (see also Baker 1975). This defensive group consciousness has been incorporated into and serves to preserve the distinctive identity of white southerners and at times has contributed to the aggressiveness of white southerners to strike out against outside threats (see Hackney 1969).

Scholars utilizing historical approaches to southern identity during and after the Civil Rights Movement, excepting perhaps Killian, began to move away from the notion that southern identity was tied to racism or the desire for white supremacy. Woodward (1960), writing during the midst of the Civil Rights struggle and witnessing the dismantling of the system of southern segregation, argued that times were changing and that white racial hostility towards blacks would not be enough to preserve southern distinctiveness. Woodward asserts that the true basis of southern distinctiveness and identity lie in the past, in the common collective experiences of the history of the South, specifically, the experiences of poverty, defeat, and sin or guilt. Degler (1977) poses a more structural argument, looking for the roots of southern distinctiveness and identity in the agricultural character of the region, particularly the institutions of slave labor and the plantation system. Degler argues that the development of a biracial society in the South, the ethnically homogeneous nature of the white population of the region, the rural

character of the South, and southern religious and political conservatism can all be attributed to the slave/plantation economy of the antebellum South.

Woodward and Degler move away from the explicit articulation of southernness with "whiteness." They do not link southern identity with a particular race; nonetheless, their conceptualizations of southern identity work better for whites than for black southerners. The collective experiences of defeat and guilt, cited by Woodward as the basis for southern identity, implicitly applies to white southerners. After all, the outcome of slavery and the Civil War would not have engendered a sense of guilt or defeat for black southerners (Griffin 2000). Degler fails to articulate how the history of the South might differentially mold the identity of white and black southerners. For example, he notes that religious and political conservatism originated in the need of white southerners to defend the institution of slavery from attack, but he does not elaborate on the political or religious character of black southerners and the impact of history on their orientations.

In the work of more contemporary historians in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement, we begin to see attempts to address the identity concerns of both black and white southerners. Noting that blacks are returning to the South in large numbers, Ayers (1996) asserts that for some African Americans the South may be seen as a homeland. Even so, however, Ayers argues that there is a different moral geography for blacks and whites in the South. Black southerners do not have flags or monuments to connect them with the "official South," but they are connected to the region by their own "sweat and sacrifice" (1996:64). Essentially, black southerners are tied to the land because their labor, and often their blood, played an important role in creating the region. The moral geography of the South becomes a site of contestation over the differing meaning of

southern identity for black and white southerners, as both groups seek to assert their own identity claims through the landscape and symbols of the South. These conflicts are a result of the demise of Jim Crow, which has created both the opportunity and the increasing desire of black southerners to assert their own identity as southerners (Wilson 1999). Throughout the 1990s, African Americans sought to remove Confederate flags from state capitals, to change state flags that incorporated the Confederate battle flag into their designs, to stop the playing of "Dixie" at college football and basketball games, and have challenged the use of public money for the upkeep of Confederate memorials (see for example Levinson 1998; Holmes and Cagle 2000; Martinez and Richardson 2000; McNinch-Su et al. 2000; Reed 2002).

Cultural conflicts over the meaning of southern identity between blacks and whites have led to increasing efforts of white southerners to hold onto symbols of the Confederate past (Wilson 1999). Cobb (1999b) argues that "identity-challenged white southerners," middle and upper class southern whites who have become increasingly assimilated into mainstream America, but still long for and wish to hold onto their southern identity, now feel that their heritage is "under siege." In essence, these white southerners feel that they are losing control over the cultural symbols associated with the region. In the work of contemporary historians, we begin to see a contested view of southern identity, as black southerners challenge the meaning of southern identity to create a more inclusive identity that incorporates the history of their group.

An overview of the work of scholars who have used historical methods as a means to understanding southern identity emphasizes the fundamental importance of race in conceptualizations of southern identity. We are also able to see the constructed nature

of the identity. Interpretations of the meaning of southern identity change over time with the flow of history itself. Rather than being static, southern identity is dynamic and contested. We must keep in mind, however, that the study of southern identity using historical methods is premised on the interpretations of historical events by scholars, and the imputation of the meaning of these events for individual southerners. One would expect that the collective experiences of a group and that group's history mold the identity of group members. Yet the nature of historical methods precludes the ability to make a direct connection between the interpretation of southern identity by historians and the self-expressed meaning of southern identity for people in the region. In other words, how do we really know what the southern identity means to southerners? How do we know that the articulation of southern identity by historians matches or resembles the actual meaning of the identity for members of this group? As I will argue, the only way to truly get at the meaning of southern identity for group members is to interview people in the region.

Social Constructionist Approaches

Scholars using historical methods examine southern identity by looking at the events of the past and how these events are interpreted, thus centering on the significance of the past for contemporary identity. Another epistemological approach, utilized by some historians (Woodward 1960; Tindall 1976) and others (Griffin 1995), may be termed "social constructionist." Drawing from both the historical experiences of southerners and cultural productions, such as the writings and media representations of southerners from outside of the region, these scholars focus on the construction of larger

cultural images of the South and the use of these images in understanding both the identity of the South and of America.

The South is generally conceptualized as a problematic region, with social ills that must be confronted and dealt with by the rest of the nation. Tindall (1976) explores the notion that the South is "benighted," a place that is culturally depleted, whose Anglo-Saxon residents are characterized by intolerance, illiteracy, poverty, and laziness. According to Tindall, the region is portrayed as a place of political corruption, lynchings, chain-gangs, disease, and the home of the Klan. Essentially, it is a land riddled with social ills, a problem South. Tindall traces the origins of the image of the "benighted South" to the 1920s, in the writings of those outside of and within the region. He argues that this now eight decades old image persists today as the dominant myth of southern identity and will prevail until the South produces a positive myth of its own identity to challenge the image.

Griffin (1995) uses literature on the construction of social problems to delineate how the South came to be seen as a social problem and a region in opposition to America. The South's identity and distinctiveness was created through sectional conflict with America, conflicts that the South continually lost. Through this process, the definition of national identity was deepened. According to Griffin, the nation could better understand itself, and what it means to be an American, by confronting its opposites -- the South -- a region at times seen as an economic problem, as plagued by racial troubles, lacking culture, in defiance of American ideals, and decidedly un-American. Thus we see the construction of the South, and by implication southerners, as in opposition to America.

Griffin's articulation of the South as in opposition to America and Tindall's description of the "benighted" South point to the other prevalent and related conceptualization of the region, as a deviant and stigmatized "other" in comparison to America. Griffin (2000) argues that images and constructions of the South and America are complex and multifaceted; therefore, we need to understand why certain definitions of the region and country gain prominence over other definitions. We need to know what "culture work" is being done by emphasizing southern distinctiveness. Griffin asserts that the imposition of a deviant regional identity on the South by non-southerners, particularly in terms of race, helps America deepen its understanding of itself, and allows America to see itself as a land of freedom in contrast to a racist South. At the same time, the nation is able to distance itself from its own history of racial atrocities by focusing on the sins of the South. The examination of media images by Griffin and Thompson (2002) demonstrates that the South continues to be used as a metaphor for racial horror in the larger American culture, allowing the nation to avoid a long overdue discourse on the state of race relations in the country.

As the reader will recall, I argued that the four epistemological approaches to southern identity are not mutually exclusive; there is overlap in these approaches. The work of Woodward (1960) provides an example of this overlap. Though Woodward focuses on the collective historical experiences of southerners as the basis for southern identity, he also utilizes the social constructionist approach in his work. Woodward uses larger myths of America as a land of prosperity, innocence, and success to contrast the experience of southerners, at least white southerners, as a people who have suffered from poverty, guilt, and defeat. Thus Woodward uses both a social constructionist and

historical approach to articulate the deviant and stigmatized nature of the southern identity.

While Woodward centers his argument on the identity of southerners, the other scholars discussed who have used the social constructionist approach focus on larger cultural images of the region. Their emphasis is on regional identity, often imposed from the outside, rather than the self-proclaimed identity of southerners per se. These scholars point to the importance of the use of regional identities in articulating the larger national identity. One would assume that the identity of the region as a whole would also shape the identity of the residents of the region. Imposed collective definitions of the South and southerners may influence the decision of geographic southerners to accept or reject a southern identity. Empirical data are needed to unravel these assumptions. Using the social constructionist approach, the South has been articulated as a stigmatized and problematic region. What remains to be explored is the influence of these images on the identity of southerners. Do southerners feel that they are stigmatized? Do they feel guilty? If so, which southerners? Are black southerners equally stigmatized as southerners, or does their race and victimization inoculate them against this, so these larger cultural images apply only to white southerners? Here again we see the need to interview southerners themselves, to ask them about the meaning of southern identity, in order to understand how the larger regional identity affects the identity of southerners.

Literary Approaches

A third epistemological approach to the study of southern identity involves the analysis of southern literature and writings. Scholars who seek to understand the region

and its people through literary approaches examine fiction, non-fiction, and autobiographical works of southerners. The writings of southerners are seen as offering a window into the meaning of the region and how regional understandings are interpreted and assimilated into the identity of southerners.

Literary scholars of the South often tie regional images and understandings to the psychological needs of individual southern writers. Both King (1980) and Hobson (1983, 1999), for example, describe much southern writing as autobiographical or confessional. Southern writers seem to be plagued by deep psychological tensions, rooted in their ambivalent feelings about the region and a need to free themselves from the past. Hobson writes that "the radical need of the Southerner to explain and interpret the South is an old and prevalent condition…the Southerner, more than other Americans, has felt he had something to explain, to justify, to defend, or to affirm" (1983:3).

For Hobson, the identity of southerners is intimately tied to the history of the South, generating this need to explain, to come to terms with the past. He argues that southern writers have dealt with this psychological need by either becoming apologists, glorifying the region, its past, and its values in an effort to combat images of a benighted South, or by becoming critics of the region, viewing the past as a burden, steeped in sin, guilt, and shame. In a similar vein, King (1980) examines the literature of the Southern Renaissance (e.g. William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, Allen Tate, W.J. Cash, Lillian Smith, and Robert Penn Warren, among others) as an attempt by writers to deal with the South's past. Incorporating Freudian theory into his analysis, King asserts that southern writers during this time period confronted a problematic past that had to be demystified and "worked through" in order to achieve a higher level of understanding of both self and

region, eventually reaching self-consciousness through these attempts to find freedom from the burden of the past.

While Hobson and King focus on the need of southern writers to deal with a troubling and problematic past, O'Brien (1979) uses the analysis of literature to examine the construction and use of "ideas" of the South. For O'Brien, the idea of the South is complex and multifaceted. Like Hobson and King, he recognizes the importance of the intersection of biography and regional identity. However, O'Brien concludes that individual southern writers can identify with and use different aspects of the complex regional identity to fulfill their own personal needs. Thus for O'Brien, the notion of the South is a fragmented construct, allowing individual southerners to latch onto particular ideas of what the South is for their own purposes, to fix their own place in the region.

The scholars discussed above, who examine literary texts in order to decipher the meaning of southern identity, reveal the psychological tensions that can be associated with southern identity, the complexity of ideas of the South, and the burden of the southern past, as does Woodward (1960). These analyses serve an important function by generating an understanding of the ways in which regional events and images mold the identity of individual southerners. However, though fiction, non-fiction, and autobiographical texts can aid in linking larger regional understandings with southern identity, they are limited in their utility for understanding southern identity more generally. For example, how do we know that the concerns of southern writers, the ways in which they grapple with their own southernness, are similar to the concerns and issues faced by ordinary southerners, those who do not feel the need, or are not able, to express themselves in published works? O'Brien (1979) briefly touches on this issue in his

analysis of southern writing in the 1930s. Intellectual writing in the South at this time had a liberal tone, which did not always correspond with the social conservatism of many people in the South. O'Brien points to the possible discrepancies between the writings of intellectuals and the sentiments of common southerners. Yet again, then, we see the need to examine the actual utterances of southern people in order to assess whether the identity of southerners expressed in literary works is similar to the meaning given to southern identity by ordinary southerners. Examining southern identity from a social-psychological perspective can aid in this endeavor.

The Social-Psychological Approach

Throughout this discussion of the epistemological approaches to southern identity, I have argued for the need to examine southern identity by analyzing what southerners themselves have to say about the identity, looking at southern identity by focusing on the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of the region's people. This type of analysis may be termed the social-psychological approach. The main proponent of this perspective in the study of the South and the only prominent scholar to use this approach is John Shelton Reed.

Using survey data, Reed provides systematic analyses of the attitudes and beliefs of white southerners. In his 1972 book, *The Enduring South: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society*, Reed's examination of public opinion data led him to conclude that even though the South had begun to converge with the rest of the nation in terms of racial attitudes, urbanization and industrialization, income, and educational levels, cultural differences still persist of a "quasi-ethnic sort," rooted in the different histories of

American regional groups. Despite indications of regional convergence in the areas noted above, Reed found that southerners had a tendency to be more religious, more attached to their homeplace, and more likely to accept the private use of force. Reed argued that the cultural differences of southerners created differences in institutional arrangements (such as churches, the family, schools, and the mass media of the South) that would foster the continuing cultural distinctiveness of the region.

In a later work, *Southerners: The Social Psychology of Sectionalism* (1983), Reed continued to explore the distinctiveness of white southerners as an ethnic group. In this analysis, data are taken from the 1971 general population survey of North Carolina. Some of the more important findings from *Southerners* are that interest in the history of the South and attachment to symbols of the Lost Cause increase identification with the region, that a sense of grievance on the South's behalf increases regional identification, and that the "traditional values orientation" (associated with traits such as familialism, localism, fatalism, resistance to innovation, racism, suspicion of outsiders, traditional sex-role ideology, and some aspects of authoritarianism) that has been seen as an ethnic marker of southerners is declining. Reed concludes that white southerners are still a distinct group, even if the content of the southern identity is changing. These data, though, are now almost 40 years old, and how well they map the cognitions, emotions, and understandings of southerners today is simply not known.

Reed does an impressive job using survey data to analyze the nature of southern identity, being careful to control for such variables as education, income, and rural/urban residence in order to isolate the "southern" effect on attitudes (see Griffin 2001). One obvious problem with Reed's work, which he notes, is that his analysis pertains only to

white southerners, so we still know little about the attitudes and beliefs of black southerners. Though Reed is explicit about the omission of blacks and other racial/ethnic groups from his analysis, he nonetheless often uses the term "southerner" or the "South," when he is really talking about the white South or white southerners (Griffin 2001). As Griffin points out, using such universalizing terms masks the different experiences of black and white southerners. For example, Reed discusses the "individualism" of southerners, ignoring the communalism of black southerners. Further, though responses to carefully worded polling questions can provide useful information on the social-psychology of regionalism, such data are nonetheless limited in their depth and richness. Close-ended survey questions, such as the type primarily used by Reed, limit the possible responses of participants to pre-conceived categories of the scholar's, not the respondent's, invention (Weiss 1994; Shuy 2003). Since respondents have more flexibility in how they choose to speak in unstructured interviews, qualitative studies using open-ended questions allow for self-generated responses and the gathering of detailed data that are influenced less by the researcher.

Despite the limits of survey data in providing a deep and rich understanding of the meaning of southern identity, Reed's work using the social-psychological approach to southern identity fills a needed gap in our understanding of southern identity. He is one of the few scholars of southern identity who has focused on the articulations of southern identity by southerners themselves as an alternative to the analysis of historical events, the construction and operation of larger cultural images of the South, and literature of the region. More work needs to be done in this vein, using current data, with an eye towards linking the formulation of southern identity by southerners to the findings of scholars

using other epistemological approaches. In this study, my objective is to use the social-psychological approach to more deeply explore the meaning, content, and practice of southern identity. However, unlike Reed, I have used in-depth interviews with both black and white southerners, supplemented by the analysis of existing survey data, in order to obtain the type of rich and detailed data necessary to understand more fully the meaning of southern identity for southerners themselves.

Conceptualizations of Southern Identity

From the work of scholars using the four epistemological approaches to southern identity, we can see several different conceptualizations of the South and southern identity. The South as a region has been viewed as stigmatized, benighted (Tindall 1976), in opposition to American, or un-American, tainted by the racial atrocities of its past (Griffin 1995, 2000; Griffin and Thompson 2002). Southerners themselves, more accurately white southerners, have also been viewed as stigmatized (Woodward 1960; Killian 1970). The burden of the past creates a need for southerners to "tell about the South," to deal with the psychological tensions of being southern through exploring the region and identity in literature (King 1980; Hobson 1983). Southern identity has been racialized, often associated with white southerners (Phillips 1928; Cash 1941), and in need of incorporating black southerners into a more inclusive southern identity (Cobb 1999b; Wilson 1999). Finally, southern identity, again, at least for white southerners, has been conceptualized as an ethnic, or quasi-ethnic identity (Killian 1970; Reed 1982).

Interestingly, scholars of the South who have used the same methods for exploring southern identity have come to very different conclusions about the identity.

For example, Woodward (1960) uses historical methods to conclude that the southern identity is stigmatized[3], the antithesis of the larger national identity, while Phillips (1928) and Cash (1941) use the same methods to conclude that race is an essential foundation of the identity. Killian (1970) uses historical methods to argue that white southerners are a minority group, almost ethnic in nature, whose defensive reactions to what is perceived as prejudicial and discriminatory treatment by non-southerners functions to preserve the distinctiveness of the group. How are we to sort out and discover the nature of southern identity, in light of these varying conceptualizations of its meaning, even among scholars using similar methodologies? As I have argued previously, we need to look at southern identity by using the social-pscyhological approach, analyzing the articulations and constructions of identity by southerners themselves, instead of relying so heavily on the collective experiences of southerners, socially constructed images of the region, or the literary products of southerners. Qualitative data sources, such as in-depth interviews, enable the researcher to understand the "interior experiences" of the people studied, to grasp what they perceive and how they interpret their perceptions (Weiss 1994). By asking southerners about their identity as southerners, we can begin to assess the adequacy of the interpretations of southern identity provided by the work of scholars using these other epistemological approaches.

The three conceptualizations of southern identity that have been illuminated through the discussion of the four epistemological approaches (southern identity as stigmatized, racialized, and/or ethnic) have been used as orienting concepts for my study. I have framed the study with an eye towards exploring these three ways of interpreting

[3] As noted previously, though Woodward explicitly seeks a definition of southern identity that is not based on race, his notion of stigma is nonetheless heavily influenced by race.

southern identity. These concepts are not mutually excusive. For example, scholars may center their examination of southern identity with an emphasis on a particular concept, such as ethnicity, by drawing from and using the concepts of race and stigma. Nonetheless, treating these analytical constructs separately provides a useful way of organizing our thinking about southern identity.

Southern Identity as Stigmatized

Goffman (1963:3) provides perhaps the most often cited definition of stigma as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" and that reduces the person in our minds to a "tainted, discounted one." It is unlikely that southern identity is stigmatized to a degree that would fit with Goffman's definition as an attribute that is deeply discrediting. Though the emphasis placed on the role of stigma in the creation and maintenance of southern identity varies among scholars, literature on the South suggests that certainly there are negative images associated with the region and its people, images which have often been imposed by non-southerners (Cash 1941; Woodward 1960; Killian 1970; Tindall 1976; Ayers 1996; Griffin 2000). These images apply particularly to white southerners, who have been described as possessing minds that are "flawed" (Cash 1941). It has even been suggested that poor white southerners have no minds at all (Campbell 1988). White southerners, particularly poor white southerners, have been described as one of the few groups in contemporary America that it is socially acceptable to denigrate (Newby 1987; Kirby 1995), in part because they seem to have brought their problems on themselves through their slavery, racism, and obsession with the past (Ayers 1996).

Data from the 1990 General Social Survey seem to support these assertions (see Table 1, Appendix A). In that survey, 1372 respondents, thought to be representative of the non-institutionalized adult population in the United States, were asked about their perceptions of the wealth, work practices, violence, intelligence, use of welfare, and patriotism of several different racial/ethnic groups -- whites, Jews, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and southern whites. Respondents were asked to give their answers in reference to a 7 point scale. So, for example, using the first variable gauging perceptions of the wealth of the racial/ethnic groups, respondents were instructed that a score of 1 means that "you think almost all of the people in that group are 'rich,'" a score of 7 means that "you think almost everyone in the group are 'poor,'" and a score of 4 means that "you think that the group is not towards one end or another." Other variables coded according to this scheme were hard-working/lazy, violence-prone/not violence-prone, unintelligent/intelligent, self-supporting/living off welfare, and patriotic/unpatriotic. Looking at differences in perceptions of southern whites among northern whites, southern whites, and blacks,[4] I find that northern whites were more likely to view white southerners as lazier and less patriotic than southern whites thought of themselves or blacks thought of them. Both northern whites and blacks were more likely to view southern whites as more violent, less intelligent, and more likely to live off welfare than southern whites view themselves. Though findings show that white southerners are not stereotyped to the same degree as many of the other racial/ethnic groups examined (such as Jews, blacks, and Hispanics), they are nonetheless consistently stereotyped in a more negative manner than whites more generally. Southern whites are seen by northern

[4] Differences between the attitudes of northern and southern blacks were not significant for the variables discussed. Due to this fact, as well as the small number of blacks in the sample, blacks from both regions

whites, blacks, and by their own admission as poorer, lazier, less intelligent, more likely to live off welfare, and less patriotic than whites more generally. Southern whites and northern whites view southern whites as more violent than whites generally, while blacks show no significant difference in their views of the violence of southern whites and whites as a whole. So according to these data, southern whites agree with and perhaps have internalized some of the negative views often associated with their region, even if not to the same degree as northern whites and blacks.

Jones et al. (1984) argue that during the stigmatization process, "marks," something which one bears that may define him or her as deviant, are linked to negative stereotypes. Though southerners may possess no physical "marks" that indicate their stigmatized status, they do bear one identifying trait, their accent (Killian 1970; Ayers 1996). The southerner's accent gives away his or her place of origin and may be associated with the types of negative images of the South mentioned above. According to Ayers (1996), "a Southern accent is often understood, inside the South as well as beyond its borders, as a symbol of poor education, low ambition, and reactionary politics" (1996:71). Of course, not all southerners have accents, and some southerners may choose to hide their accent to avoid the negative connotations associated with the mark. However, as Reed (1982) notes, even if cues to one's regional identity are not readily available, the common use of the question, "Where are you from?" in social interaction partially makes up for the absence of more visible markers of regional identity.

Link and Phelan (2001) expand on Jones et al.'s (1984) definition of stigma, arguing that the process of stigmatization includes a component of discrimination.

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were combined into one category.

Killian (1970), however, finds little evidence that southerners actually experience prejudice or discrimination based on their regional identity. Even so, Killian argues that white southerners have reacted as a defensive minority group and regard themselves as the object of discrimination (see also Baker 1975). Certainly the literature does suggest, as noted previously, that non-southerners associate many negative traits with the region and its people, such as being racist, poor, and backwards (Tindall 1976; Ayers 1996; Griffin 2000), images that could engender defensive reactions on the part of white southerners. Data from the Fall 1999 Southern Focus Poll provide some more concrete evidence to support Killian's argument (see Table 2a-c, Appendix A). Southerners are significantly more likely than northerners to assert that non-southerners (1) look down on southerners (43.4% v. 23.7%), (2) dislike southerners (23.3% v. 11.7%), and (3) "books and articles about the South play up its bad points" (53.3% v. 37.2%). So Killian makes an interesting point. He draws attention to the fact that it is not enough to look at the larger cultural images of a group, in this case whether or not the identity of a group is stigmatized, or the objective experiences of prejudice and discrimination. We need to also look at how a group subjectively interprets their identity and the experiences that both frame that identity and are framed by it[5]. How does a group that is often stigmatized in the larger culture make sense of their identity? In order to uncover the meaning of southern identity for southerners -- that is, to discover whether or not they see the identity as stigmatized -- we need to talk to southerners about their regional identity, the images

[5] Constructions of the South as a stigmatized and deviant region and the negative stereotypes associated with southerners have an impositional character, forced on southerners by non-southerners. Huddy (2001) asserts that it is not enough to know the meaning of an identity imposed by outsiders, or in this case non-southerners, we also need to know the meaning of the identity for those who claim to be southern.

and traits that they associate with the identity, and how they feel that they are viewed by those outside of the region.

By talking to southerners, I hope to resolve the paradox that I discussed earlier: why would southerners choose to identify with a regional identity that may be viewed as stigmatized? But to resolve this issue, we need a deeper understanding of the subjective meaning of the southern identity. The first step in unraveling this paradox, as I suggested previously, is to examine whether the identity is viewed as one that is ascribed to an individual by others or as one that may be chosen, even if the choice is constrained. Work by Reed (1983) and Griffin (2006b) suggest that southern identity claims are to some degree self-ascribed (based on birth, family history, or residence in the region), but also exhibit a degree of volition or choice. I argued that interview data are needed to flesh out these issues. If through my interviews I find that southerners view the identity largely as an ascriptive identity, that those who are born in the South are considered to be southerners, regardless of their views of the region or their identification with the region, then the paradox is no longer problematical. People claim a southern identity, even though it may be stigmatized, because they feel that they are led "naturally" to do so by their ancestry. Their "claim" is not really a choice at all, but a fact of imposition or self-ascription based on birth or residence[6].

On the other hand, if southern identity is viewed by southerners as a matter of choice, then the paradox stands. Tajfel (1978) argues that people seek to have positive social identities, so why would they claim a negatively-valued identity, particularly in such large numbers? One possible explanation is that southerners' view of the regional

[6] Though tied to birth or residence in the region, accent may also act as an ascriptive trait pushing individuals to claim a southern identity.

identity may differ from larger cultural images of the South and southerners. Southerners may not view the identity as stigmatized. We have very little empirical data in terms of how southerners view southern identity. Reed's (1983) analysis of 1971 survey data shows some evidence that white North Carolinians did see southern identity as stigmatized. However, these perceptions may have changed in the last thirty years in light of in-migration to the region by non-southerners, the restructuring of race relations, and other deep-seated changes in the South following the Civil Rights movement. The recent data from the Southern Focus Polls I discussed above (Table 2) also lend some support to the claim that southerners view themselves as a stigmatized group, at least more so than northerners see them. Interviews are needed to explore these issues more deeply.

Even if southerners recognize the identity as stigmatized, they may transform the stigmatized identity into a source of positive esteem. Tajfel and Turner (1986) argue that when a group's status in negatively evaluated in comparison to another group, members of the in-group may be motivated to make their existing group more positively distinct. Tajfel and Turner propose several options for changing a stigmatized identity into a source of positive esteem, including comparing the ingroup to the outgroup on a new dimension, changing the values assigned to the attributes of the ingroup thereby making previously negative comparisons positive, and changing the outgroup of comparison. Considering that the construction of southern identity is based on its opposition to the "North," or perhaps to an idealized "America," it is unlikely that southerners would be able to change their group of comparison. However, the other two options for changing

negative evaluations in order to achieve positive distinctiveness may be applicable to southerners.

The first option outlined by Tajfel and Turner involves changing the dimensions on which comparisons are made between ingroups and outgroups. Southerners may exhibit this technique by choosing to ignore the stigmatizing qualities of the southern identity and focus on its positive aspects. Griffin (2000) argues that there are many "Souths." So though there are negative traits associated with southernness, there are also many traits associated with one or another South that may be seen as positive. For example, data from the Fall 1993 Southern Focus Poll show that geographic southerners describe themselves as more courteous (84.8%), more religious (78.4%), more hardworking (52.2%), less pushy (73.5%), more patriotic (68.8%), more family oriented (75.3%), more conservative (76.2%), less violent (53.5%), more contented with life (75.6%), and about the same in intelligence (52.3%) than people from other regions (see Table 3a-j, Appendix A)[7]. Thus there are positive elements of southern identity that southerners may choose to associate with the identity, eschewing the negative traits associated with the identity.

Another option is for the group to embrace the stigmatized identity, but change the values of the attributes associated with the identity (Tajfel and Turner 1986). For example, Kirby (1995) discusses working class southern whites' embracement of the "redneck" stereotype. Kirby uses the emergence of "redneck pride" songs in country

[7] Attributes given are the percentage of geographic southerners who claimed that southerners were more or less _____. Interestingly, Northerners surveyed gave comparable responses, indicating that they too associate many positive traits with southerners (full statistics given in Appendix A). However, as Griffin (2006b) points out, these data could show the effects of "social desirability," as non-southern respondents may have wished to avoid offending interviewers from the South and/or affiliated with the University of North Carolina.

music, which celebrate “rednecks,” “hillbillies,” “country boys,” and “outlaws” to demonstrate the way in which pejoratives are transmuted into sources of identity and pride. According to Kirby, those who embrace the “redneck” identity are expressing pride in a lower-class identity, showing resistance to “condescending authority and bourgeois conformity” (1995:72). Working-class white southerners who embrace the identity may refer to each other as rednecks, but an outsider is not allowed to address these people as rednecks, as this would be an insult or an affront. In the hands of outsiders, the term redneck is a slur, but for insiders it is a source of identity. Similarly, Cobb (1999b) argues that in the 1990s “redneck” had become something of a term of endearment for some white southerners.

One final note should be made in this discussion. It is possible that even if southerners see their identity as stigmatized, they may nonetheless experience positive feelings from the identity simply because it is different and distinct (Brewer 1991). Goffman (1963) argues that the stigmatized often view their identity in a negative light, corresponding with the views of the stigmatizer. Thus, the stigmatized often experience feelings of shame. Brewer articulates a somewhat different view. According to Brewer, social identities associated with groups fulfill two simultaneous needs, the need for validation and similarity to others, and the need for uniqueness and individuation. As a member of a group, one can feel a sense of shared community with other group members, while also feeling a sense of distinctiveness from other groups and the homogenized “mass.” Brewer emphasizes that the distinctiveness of groups is extremely important, independent of the evaluation or status attached to a group. Thus, for southerners, even though their group may be stigmatized, the feeling of distinctiveness from other groups,

along with a sense of community with their co-regionalists, may lead to the experience of positive feelings by group members.

The issues that I have raised in the above discussion need to be explored by combining the social psychological perspective to the study of southerners using interviews of southerners. Open-ended questions, like the type used in the in-depth interview format, will help us to better understand the nature of perceived stigmatization for contemporary southerners, whether or not southerners feel that they have experienced prejudice or discrimination based on their southern identity, what forms prejudice or discrimination might take, and how identities are managed in light of the potentially stigmatizing images of southerners in the larger culture. This type of data will help explain the seemingly paradoxical tendency of southerners to claim a de-valued identity.

Race and Southern Identity

Race has played a central role in the analysis of southern identity. Indeed, the "South" is virtually inconceivable without sustained attention to race. Scholarly work using the four epistemological approaches to southern identity have overwhelmingly focused on southern identity in terms of whites. Yet, analysis of pooled data from all of the Southern Focus Polls (Spring 1992 through the Spring 2001 -- see Table 4, Appendix A), shows that black southerners are slightly more likely to claim a southern identity than white southerners (77.8% to 75.2%). Considering that southern identity has been too often (if implicitly) associated with white southerners, another paradox, this one being that such a high percentage of black southerners claim the identity, seems to arise.

In order to understand this second paradox, we need to grasp the meaning of the southern identity for white and black southerners. It is possible that white southerners and black southerners have very different conceptualizations of their southern identity. For example, Wilson (1999) points out that as black southerners have tried to assert their sense of southernness, particularly through challenging the use of such symbols as the Confederate flag, white southerners have resisted these challenges by reasserting older Southern myths, such as the myth of the Lost Cause. White southerners may express their southern identity by identifying with the Lost Cause, by remembering Confederate veterans, or by embracing Confederate symbols. It is unlikely that black southerners would feel a strong sense of reverence or identification with these racialized symbols, considering their history of racial oppression and exploitation. Ayers (1996) suggests that for black southerners, even those now living in the North, the South may function as a homeland, more so than the continent of Africa, which is so far removed from the experiences of contemporary African Americans. He further speculates that the return migration of blacks to the South may be indicative of African Americans' view of the South as the "foundation for their own virtues" (1996:63). Black southerners may be tied to the South because their sweat and labor played an integral role in creating the region, because their struggles for freedom and liberation were focused in the South.

As Wilson (1999) points out, black southerners have begun to assert their identity as southerners following the demise of Jim Crow. In addition to challenging symbols of the South associated with racial oppression, they have attempted to change the symbolic and moral landscape of the South by erecting monuments to the Civil Rights movement in places like Selma and Montgomery, Alabama (see, for example, Horwitz 1998).

Through these conflicts we see black southerners trying to incorporate their past and historical experiences as part of the collective memory of the South, and we also see the very nature of the meaning of southern identity in a process of transition. For this reason, understanding contemporary meanings of southern identity, and whatever racial differences in them that may exist, becomes all the more important.

I would suspect that white and black southerners mean very different things when they say they are southerners. However, it is possible that certain aspects of southern identity provide common meaning for both white and black southerners. For example, members of both races plausibly claim a southern identity because they associate southernness with a slower pace of life, a stronger sense of family, and deeper religious communities. Data from the Spring 1992, Fall 1993, and Fall 1995 Southern Focus Polls can be used to help assess whether there is common ground for southern identity for both races. Griffin (2006) created an index using data from these polls to measure the degree to which respondents hold positive stereotypical views of the South and southerners. In these polls, respondents were asked whether people in the region (as compared to non-southerners) were characterized by particular traits, such as being courteous, family-oriented, religious, patriotic, etc. Items were scored as positive or negative based on Reed's (1983) study, and according to Griffin's (2006) understanding of what most Americans would consider positive or negative characteristics of the South and southerners[8]. Scores range from 0 (low) to 100 (high), indicating the percent of positive

[8] In the Spring 1992 Poll, positive views of the region are defined by the assertion that southerners are courteous, religious, industrious, patriotic, slow, generous, and loyal, and that northerners are more aggressive, sophisticated, and materialistic. In the Fall 1993 Poll, positive views of the region are defined by the assertion that southerners are more courteous, religious, hardworking, patriotic, family-oriented, conservative, contented with life, and intelligent, and that southerners are less pushy and violent. In the Fall 1995 Poll, positive views of the region are viewed as the response that the South is characterized as a place one would want to retire, having the best schools, a good vacation destination, a place to establish

attributes chosen by each respondent. Using this index, an analysis of the responses of black and white southerners shows that white southerners hold significantly more positive views of the region and its people than black southerners; the former agree with about 64 percent of the positive stereotypes, the latter, with about 59 percent[9]. This difference is relatively small, however, and it must be coupled with the fact that clear majorities of both races impute positive qualities to the South and southerners. Thus, there does appear to be ground in the South for both races to come together and share a common sense of southern identity. As Wilson (1999) points out, there is a bi-racial heritage in the South. Black and white southerners have shared the same music, food, literature, religion, accent, and cultural practices. Perhaps from this cultural material black and white southerners can forge a new, more inclusive southern identity. As part of this effort, it would seem necessary for each group to find symbols of the region that both groups can embrace.

I have speculated here as to the possible differences and similarities that black and white southerners may give to the meaning of southern identity. At this point in time, we are simply in the dark in terms of how each group views and practices the identity. In my study I explore the meaning of the southern identity for these two groups in order to shed light on the changing nature of what it means to be a southerner and to fill this large gap in the literature on the South.

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permanent residence, where they have the best weather, the healthiest lifestyles, that is growing in importance, has the best job opportunities, the friendliest people, the most religious, and the strongest family values, and the response that other regions are characterized by the highest cost of living and the most cosmopolitan. For more details on the creation of this scale, see Griffin and Thoits (unpublished).

Southern Identity as an Ethnic Identity

Using different kinds of information, Killian (1970) and Reed (1982, 1983) conclude that southern identity, for whites, is similar to an ethnic or "quasi-ethnic" identity. For Killian, this ethnicity, or as he terms it, minority group status, is based on the stigmatized nature of white southern identity and the defensive reactions of white southerners in response to perceived prejudice or discrimination. Reed also views southerners as bound by a common regional history and by a sense of solidarity forged by sectional conflict. However, Reed discusses several other dimensions of southern identity that are perhaps more directly analogous to aspects of ethnic groups. Southerners often base their identity on family and residential history in the South, similar to the notion of ancestry in ethnic identity, and they see themselves as similar to and interdependent with other southerners, sharing characteristics such as the southern accent. Finally, Reed points out that southerners see themselves as dissimilar and distinct from non-southerners, often viewing non-southerners in stereotyped ways[10].

Reed's ethnic analogy raises several questions that need further exploration. Do southerners themselves view the identity as an ethnic identity, rooted in ancestry? What cultural practices do southerners associate with the identity? As I've noted, Reed's analogy is premised on his study of white southerners: does the ethnic analogy work for black southerners as well?

I think not. Black southerners already have a strong sense of racial/ethnic identity. A three item index created from variables in the 2001 Southern Focus Poll

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[9] Scores given indicate the mean percent of positive attributes given by the group.
[10] Griffin (2001) critiques Reed's ethnic analogy as applicable to white southerners, excluding black southerners. Reed acknowledges that his work applies to white southerners, but often speaks more generally in terms of "southerners" and "non-southerners."

asking respondents 1) if their race is an important part of who they are, 2) if they identify closely with their race, and 3) if they are very aware of their race in day-to-day interactions, measures the racial consciousness of black and white southerners. Each variable is coded on a scale from 1 "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree." A score of 3 on the index indicates the lowest level of racial consciousness, and a score of 15 indicates the highest level of racial consciousness. Mean scores from this index show that African Americans have a substantially higher level of racial consciousness (13.2) than whites (9.5). In addition, African American respondents were asked if they felt "happy," "proud," and "lucky" to be black. I added these three questions to the three just discussed (importance, awareness, and identification) to form a six-item scale, scored so that six is the lowest level of racial consciousness and a score of 30 is the highest level. On this scale, the mean score for blacks is 27.0. These data indicate that blacks have a very strong sense of racial consciousness, in particular compared to whites; as a consequence, southern identity may be less important for blacks. Data from the Southern Focus Polls (see Table 5, Appendix A), for example, show that while comparable rates of black and white southerners see southern identity as important (for example, 28.9% of whites and 25.2% of blacks say that the identity is "very important"), black southerners are more likely to assert that their southern identity is "not at all important to them" (28.3% of blacks make this claim, as compared to 17.6% of whites).

For white southerners, being "southern" may provide a sense of ethnic identity that seems unavailable for assimilated whites who lack a strong ethnic or ancestral identity, such as identifying as "Irish" or "German." Ruth Frankenberg (1997) has referred to whiteness as an "unmarked marker" of status. Similarly, Roediger (1991)

argues that the tendency to ignore white ethnicity gives it more hegemonic power. Whiteness begins to be viewed as "natural." If being white is somehow "normal" or "natural," lacking distinction, then it is possible that whites may be more invested in claiming other sources of identity. Mary Waters (1990) makes this argument in her book, *Ethnic Options*. She conducted in-depth interviews with third and fourth generation white ethnics in communities in California and Philadelphia, concluding that for her respondents, ethnicity seemed to be symbolic in nature. Using Gans' (1979) formulation of symbolic ethnicity as the identification with an ethnicity that is expressive in nature and "cost-free," Waters argues that her white respondents continue to identify with their ethnicity because it provides them with a sense of pleasure and entails little or no costs. Importantly, Waters asserts that many respondents choose to identify with their ethnicity because it allows them to be distinct, not just "vanilla," as one respondent termed being white (1990:151). Further, being ethnic also simultaneously allowed respondents to feel that they were part of a larger community[11]. This notion of being part of a community may be an important function of ethnicity. Cornell West (cited in Waters 1999) argues that ethnicity can be understood as a "narrative," a story that people articulate about themselves that speaks to their history, their world, and their place in that world. Ethnicity provides us with a sense of who a people are, where they have been, and where they are going.

If ethnicity functions to tell us about who we are, then whites, feeling that they are just "vanilla," plausibly have a special need to claim a sense of ethnicity. The

[11] Note that Waters' conclusions are quite similar to Brewer's (1991) theory of optimal distinctiveness, which states that group membership allows individuals to be both similar to others and distinct from out-group members at the same time.

respondents Mary Waters (1990) interviewed, who were Roman Catholics and non-southerners, identified as Irish, Italians, English, German, and an assortment of other ethnicities. There is evidence to suggest that whites in the South may be more likely to identify as "southern" than as English, German, Irish, or some other ethnicity. Degler (1977) argues that slave/plantation system of the South affected the demographic make-up of the region. Fewer immigrants from continental Europe came to the South because they did not want to compete with the slave labor system and because the agricultural nature of the southern economy afforded few opportunities for work in cities and factories. As a consequence, immigrants settled in the North, and the white population of the South was, and by Degler's argument still is today, more homogenous in ethnic background than the rest of the United States. White southerners have also been described as "more American" than whites in other regions due to the fact that a higher percentage of whites living in the South trace their roots back to English or Scots, descended from the colonial days of the country (Killian 1970). Some have argued, as Reed (1982) points out, that those European immigrants who have settled in the South have been more thoroughly integrated into the region than immigrants in other parts of the country.

One explanation for the integration of European immigrants into the South may lie in the history of racial conflict in the region. In the South, division has been primarily between whites and blacks[12]. So what was most important in the South was whether you

[12] The focus on the solidarity experienced by whites in the South due to their whiteness can be taken too far. As Killian (1970) notes, Catholics and Jews in the South did experience a great deal of prejudice and discrimination in the region, even though they were considered white. Interestingly, analyses of Southern Focus Poll data does show that Catholic and Jews in the South are less likely to claim a southern identity, pointing to the importance of examining competing identities (Griffin et al. 2005). I discuss competing identities in the next section.

were white or black; distinctions among whites in terms of ethnicity were less salient (Killian 1970). With the demise of Jim Crow, southerners' whiteness may be less important as a focus of identity. However, the racial history of the South, combined with the fact that many white southerners have been in the South and America for generations, may make it difficult for white southerners to reclaim their ethnic ancestry (as English, Scots, Irish, etc). In this situation, I hypothesize that white southerners may be drawn to southern identity as an ethnic identity, to fill the gap in their own ancestry and to allow them to be distinct and different, while at the same time being part of a community[13]. This may explain why white southerners place more importance on southern identity than black southerners.

To assess whether (and how) southern identity may function as a symbolic ethnicity, at least for whites, we need to know if the identity is associated with any "costs" and what types of positive benefits people feel that they receive by claiming the identity. If I find evidence that some of my respondents view their regional identity in ethnic ways, I will explore how white southerners advance, affirm, celebrate, and commemorate this "ethnicity." Exploring whether southern identity can be viewed as an ethnic identity, at least for white southerners, may help us to understand the processes that lead to the creation of ethnic identities, in this case the transformation of a regional identity into an ethnic identity.

In addition to understanding how southern identity may be viewed as an ethnic identity, Reed (1982) and Howard (2000) argue that we need to look at how identities

[13] Griffin and Thompson (2003) suggest southerners may be more accurately described as members of "imagined communities," borrowing a term from the political scientist Benedict Anderson. These "communities" refer to "fraternities" of "comradeship" in which members "will never know most of their

intersect. We do not have any information pertaining to how southern identity competes with or compliments other identities, such as those based on race. For different racial/ethnic groups, is their racial/ethnic identity more important as a grounding for who they are, or their southern identity? It is possible that the white identity compliments southern identity. I have noted that southernness is often equated with white southerners. Therefore, it is likely that when white southerners speak about southerners in general, they have white southerners in mind and thus exclude black southerners. Again, we need to understand the meaning of the southern identity for white southerners in order to assess whether whiteness is closely related with being southern. I have argued that for black southerners, southern identity may be less important, since the group's racial identity as black may be more salient to them in American culture than being southern. Interviews are needed to unpack these issues.

Summary Comments

Despite all of the research and commentary on the American South, little systematic knowledge exists about what people mean concretely when they claim a southern identity. From the Southern Focus Polls, and the work of Reed (1983), Griffin and Thompson (2002, 2003), Griffin et al. (2005), and Griffin (2006b), we know what types of people claim the southern identity, but we know too little about the content, meaning, practice, and behavioral consequences of the identity for people in this region. Exploring these issues with interviews will help fill an important gap in the literature on southern identity, as well as contributing to and elaborating the existing literature on

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fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1991:6-7).

social identity theory through the study of a “real-world” identity. In the pages that follow I outline my strategy for examining southern identity.

CHAPTER II

METHODS

In this study, I explore the meaning of southern identity by asking respondents about their own articulations, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about the region. I pay particular attention to how respondents practice southern identity, whether the identity is viewed as stigmatized and the ways in which respondents deal with or interpret stigma, how the meaning of the identity may vary by the race of respondents, if the identity functions as a "symbolic ethnicity," and the importance of southern identity in comparison to respondents' racial identities. I use three conceptualizations of southern identity -- stigmatized, racialized, and ethnic -- as orienting concepts for my study. However, in accordance with a "grounded theory" approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967), my study is not limited to these imposed conceptualizations, and much of what I discovered did, in fact, transcend them.

In-Depth Interviewing

My primary data source came from face-to-face, in-depth interviews with white and black geographic southerners. In my study, I wished to learn about the perceptions and meanings associated with southern identity. Through in-depth interviews we can learn about the "interior experiences" of others, "what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions" (Weiss 1994:1). In contrast to traditional surveys, which provide answer categories that are fixed and limited, in-depth interviews pose open-ended

questions that increase the likelihood of obtaining self-generated responses (Shuy 2003). Face-to-face, in-depth interviews, which allow for a greater degree of trust and rapport to be established between the interviewer and the respondent, are particularly useful for exploring sensitive issues or complex issues (Shuy 2003). Because I explored issues involving race and the history of the South, which may have been sensitive or painful for some respondents, the in-depth interview format was the most appropriate for my study. These topics were addressed near the end of the survey, to allow time for the respondent and I to develop a comfortable relationship within the interview process before moving into a discussion of these more sensitive areas.

Interviews lasted approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours and, with the consent of respondents, were tape recorded. The consent form is located in Appendix B. One of the central goals of this study is to see if the meanings attached to southern identity vary among white and black southerners. Therefore, I interviewed roughly equal numbers of black and white self-described southerners (30 white and 29 black respondents). In addition, the sample was stratified by social class, as it is possible that upper/middle class southerners, who may identify more closely with the image of the "Sunbelt South," as typified by the growth and boosterism associated with such cities as Charlotte, Atlanta, and Nashville, (Applebome 1996) and working/lower class southerners, who may identify more closely with images of southern "rednecks" or "bamas," (Roebuck and Hickson 1982; Cobb 1999b) may have quite different ideas in terms of what it means to be a southerner. Smaller sub-samples of geographic southerners who strongly identified with the South and those who rejected a southern identity were also interviewed as conceptually important cases for the purposes of contrast (Weiss 1994).

Given the sampling specifications discussed above, a combination of purposive and snowball sampling was the most practical strategy to locate respondents for interviews. In-depth interviews are time-consuming and labor intensive; consequently, most studies are based on small samples of about 30-50 interviews (Lofland and Lofland 1995). Due to the smaller sample sizes, obtaining representative samples is not possible for in-depth interview studies. Nonetheless, Weiss (1994) argues that one can seek out a "sample of representatives" (1994:18) by purposively sampling in order to maximize the range of types of people and experiences in the target population. He suggests that purposive samples can be drawn by looking for contrast in the independent and dependent variables. In the case of my study, I sampled on the independent variable in terms of race (also with an eye for achieving variation in class, gender, and age) and on the dependent variable of claiming or rejecting a southern identity.

My objective was to interview a total of 60 geographic southerners in three different southern cities: Nashville, TN, Baton Rouge, LA, and Marion, NC. Because the South itself is a diverse region, with both mountains and lowlands, and rural and urban settings, I chose these cities to capture some of the potential variability in peoples' attitudes and perceptions which might be dependent on what part of the South they lived. Consequently, I chose Nashville, TN as representative of the Sunbelt South/upper South, Baton Rouge, LA as representative of the deep South, and Marion, NC as representative of the mountain/small town South. These cities were also selected in part because I had existing contacts in these locations to help begin snowball samples. I initially intended to interview ten white and ten black respondents in each city. I actually interviewed 65

geographic southerners. Appendix C shows the how the sample was divided by race and regional location.

In addition to stratifying the sample by race and regional location, I attempted to maximize heterogeneity in terms of social class, gender, and age (Weiss 1994). I also hoped to include a few geographic southerners who rejected a southern identity to provide contrast. The Southern Focus Polls show that roughly 70% of geographic southerners claim a southern identity (Griffin and Thompson 2002). Therefore, I felt that I was likely to encounter southerners who rejected the identity during my study. I ended up with six respondents who did not declare themselves southerners. A general breakdown of my sample by income, gender, age, education, and southern identity claims is located in Appendix D.

Snowball sampling involves collecting data on respondents who are available to the analyst, and then asking them for referrals to other potential respondents (Weiss 1994; Babbie 1998). One potential problem with snowball sampling is that when respondents make referrals, they are likely to refer the interviewer to other people much like themselves. In other words, the sample exhibits homogeneity. I overcame this problem by starting several snowball samples that were stratified on variables important to this study: race, class, and southern identity.

In each location I utilized existing personal contacts to begin snowball samples. In Nashville, I began a snowball sample with individuals from the lower/working class by using contacts at a local working class bar which has both white and black customers. I began another snowball sample of individuals in the middle/upper class by using contacts from my own university, Vanderbilt, as well as individuals who live in an upper class

neighborhood in Nashville. I located respondents in Baton Rouge through my relatives, who have lived in the area for many generations. Some of my relatives are in the middle/upper-middle class, while others are in the working class. These relatives, who all lived in integrated neighborhoods, helped me to begin snowball samples starting with their neighbors. With the help of neighbors, I was able to expand my samples out into other communities within the city. As a result, I was able to interview a socio-economically diverse group of black and white respondents, including some who were unemployed to those in local politics. In Marion, NC, I used existing contacts at both the local newspaper and coffee shop to begin two snowball samples. Marion is a small town with close social networks. As a consequence, it was not difficult to achieve diversity in the sample by class, age, and race, because people were able to direct me easily to other potential respondents in the community representing different backgrounds. By using multiple snowball samples, I encountered a few individuals in each town who did not define themselves as southern, as well as individuals who strongly defined themselves as southern, adding to the heterogeneity of the sample.

The interview guides used in this study are located in Appendix F. I constructed the interview questions to assess the meaning, practice, and importance of southern identity for respondents, with particular emphasis on exploring southern identity as a stigmatized identity, a racialized identity, and an ethnic or quasi-ethnic identity. In order to understand if southern identity is perceived as stigmatized, respondents were asked questions such as what traits they associate with southerners, how they feel outsiders view southerners, whether they have experienced discrimination based on their southern identity, and if jokes about southerners bother them. The fact that I interviewed both

white and black southerners allowed me to assess differences by race in the meaning of southern identity. In addition, respondents were asked whether they associate people of a particular race as southerners, and if they believed that certain races are precluded from claiming a southern identity. How southern identity might function as an ethnic, quasi-ethnic, or "symbolic ethnicity" was assessed through questions about how southern identity is practiced, how the identity competes with or interacts with other racial/ethnic identities, processes of acquiring and passing on a southern identity to future generations, and the costs and/or benefits associated with the identity.

In Appendix F, I include three different versions of the interview guide. These guides were developed in light of insights gained through conducting pilot interviews. Pilot interviews were conducted with three southerners (two white and one African American), and one person who now lives in the South after migrating from the Midwest. The pilot interviews enabled me to assess the viability of the project and the utility of my interview questions. I specifically asked the pilot interviewees if any questions seemed unclear, and if they had any suggestions in terms of additional questions. Their suggestions were incorporated into the interview guide, and the order of some questions was re-arranged to create a more logical flow. After conducting these pilot interviews, I realized that certain questions needed to be rephrased, depending on whether the respondent claimed a southern identity, claimed another regional identity, or rejected a southern identity but claimed no other regional identity. The first interview guide was used for geographic southerners who claimed a southern identity. The second guide was used for respondents who now live in the South, but migrated from another region and claim another regional identity. These respondents were asked not only about their views

of southerners, but also about their own regional identity. Such information allowed for contrast, providing insight on how people in other regions practice and experience their regional identity. Finally, the third guide was used for respondents who were born and raised in the South but rejected a southern identity, as some questions in the primary interview guide were not applicable for this group.

The nature of in-depth interviewing, which necessitates smaller sample sizes, does not allow one to make generalizations from a representative sample. Though we lose the ability to conduct statistical analyses with the data, we gain in terms of the depth, richness, and detail of the data that is gathered. By purposively sampling to maximize the range of my sample by race, social class, age, and gender, I strove to develop a "sample of representatives," that included the "full variety of instances that would be encountered anywhere" (Weiss 1994:24).

The fact that I interviewed both white and black southerners made the issue of reactivity, and its potential effect on the validity of my findings, more salient. I am a white southerner, and my race and accent may have affected the respondents' answers. Campbell (1981) looked at the race-of-interviewer effects on southern adolescents and found that the race of interviewer does affect the answers given by respondents when whites interview blacks, and vice versa. Campbell found that this bias tends to occur for racially oriented items in a survey, not for other items. In general, these effects were biased towards deference, with the respondent giving answers favorable to the interviewer's race. However, it should be noted that the race-of-interviewer effect, when present, only accounted for a small proportion of the over-all variance in the sample. Lofland and Lofland (1995) argue that the ascriptive characteristics of the researcher

should be taken into account when organizing a study, but they should not be over-emphasized. Weiss (1994) details his own experiences with interviewing and concludes that racial and ethnic differences may play a role in the respondent's initial reaction to the interviewer, but have little effect on the quality of the interview partnership. In my study, I worked to develop rapport with African American respondents, sought to obtain full, detailed responses, and placed material pertaining to race near the end of interviews in order to minimize effects of reactivity. And as Weiss points out, 'there are so many different interviewer attributes to which a respondent can react that the interviewer will surely be an insider in some ways, an outsider in others" (1994:137). Though I may not have shared the same race or social class as some respondents, I inevitably shared other qualities with them, such as being a southerner or, in some cases, being a woman. Further, my status as an outsider in terms of race could be an advantage in some instances, particularly when black respondents wanted to teach or instruct me about their experiences as southerners (Weiss 1994).

Another issue in terms of validity involves whether or not respondents will tell the truth in interviews. Obviously, one's findings will not be valid if respondents lie to the interviewer. This problem is not unique to qualitative interviewing, as it is perfectly likely that respondents may lie on a survey. Weiss (1994) argues that it is difficult for a respondent to maintain a lie throughout an interview. He counsels that to assure that respondents are being truthful, interviewers must probe for concrete and full detail. I constructed my questions in the interview guide with an eye towards obtaining rich detail and utilized probes to encourage respondents to discuss concrete incidents in their lives, in hopes of minimizing threats to validity (Gorden 1992). Further, Reed (1986) argues

that lies can be informative in and of themselves. When respondents tell an interviewer what he or she thinks that the interviewer wishes to hear, or what they think they are "supposed" to say, these data may be indicative of the respondent's understanding of "normative" responses or beliefs.

There are some drawbacks to the in-depth interviewing method, such as the small sample sizes and the time-consuming nature of this type of project. I alone conducted all of the interviews and transcribed and coded the data. Though this process was labor-intensive, it allowed me to be close and intimately familiar with my data. Further, it kept down the costs of the project. On the whole, the benefits of this type of data collection for my study outweighed the drawbacks. Through in-depth interviewing I was able to obtain detailed, rich data on the meaning of southern identity from the perspective of southerners themselves. This type of data is sorely lacking in research on southern identity.

Analysis of Interview Data

I used some of the tenents of a grounded theory approach to systematically analyze data from interviews (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Grounded theory methods are inductive strategies for analyzing data in which one uses the data to "develop progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to explain and to understand your data and to identify patterned relationships within it" (Charmaz 2001). Thus, concepts and theoretical generalizations are "grounded" in the data. According to grounded theory, analytic codes and categories are developed from the data itself, not preconceived hypotheses (Charmaz 2001). However, researchers often possess a set of

"sensitizing concepts" that spark the development of concepts in the initial phases of coding (Charmaz 2003). In the case of my study, for example, I was interested in exploring southern identity as a stigmatized, racialized, and/or ethnic identity, and these concepts, explicated in the literature review, helped guide my initial coding.

One of the hallmarks of grounded theory is the simultaneous involvement of the researcher in both the collection and analysis of data (Charmaz 2001). Unfortunately, various time and structural constraints of this study precluded doing simultaneous data collection and coding. Because I had to travel to three different cities and live in these areas for short periods of time (usually three weeks to a month), all of my time at a particular site was devoted to data collection. Consequently, transcribing of the data and coding generally took place after data collection. However, if I discovered new topics that I thought would be useful to explore as I was collecting data, I would include these topics in future interviews. Although I was unable simultaneously to collect and code the data, I nonetheless drew on inductive techniques of analysis when examining the data. Once I transcribed an interview and any supportive fieldnotes, I entered the data into ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis package (Muhr 2004). ATLAS.ti facilitates the coding and retrieval of qualitative data.

Grounded theory coding involves a two-step process: 1) initial or open coding, and 2) selective or focused coding (Charmaz 2003). In the initial phase of coding, data are analyzed line-by-line and actions or events occurring in the data are defined (Charmaz 2001). Initial coding helps the researcher to break the data into categories and uncover patterns in the data, facilitated by the use of active codes. In this initial phase, I

coded major themes, such as memories of segregation, discussion of southern customs, or perceptions of southern traits.

In more focused coding, the researcher begins to narrow down the codes and categories, cutting out less productive, less useful codes and focusing on codes that are seen as more abstract and theoretically relevant in the analysis (Charmaz 2003). During this phase of analysis I began to focus in on such issues as techniques white southerners use to revise the past, or instances demonstrating how black southerners coped with and/or resisted segregation. Through this process, analytic frameworks are constructed that can be compared with different interviews and sets of fieldnotes in the study (Charmaz 2003). By using this coding technique, I was able to focus in on how southern identity may function as a stigmatized, racialized, and/or ethnic identity for my respondents.

Summary

My study will help to fill a significant gap in the existing literature on the South by examining southern identity from the perspective of southerners themselves, listening to what southerners have to say about their region, their identity, and their perceptions of other southerners. From this study, I will also be able to gain a clearer picture concerning how black southerners interpret and relate to southern identity, a subject not yet addressed with systematic sociological data. Finally, this study will give flesh and substance to many of the tenents of social identity theory, allowing for the examination of real group-based identities in a real world context. Southern identity complicates and can enrich our understanding of social identity, as it is an identity that involves both

imposition and voluntary choice, that may be chosen despite being negatively valued by many in the larger culture, with content that may vary by race, and with a meaning that is now unclear in light of the demise of the Jim Crow South. As such, the study of the meaning of southern identity can provide insights for both scholars interested in the South and researchers interested in social identity theory.

CHAPTER III

SOUTHERN IDENTITY AS AN ETHNIC IDENTITY

While definitions of what precisely constitutes an ethnic group vary, they tend to emphasize two components, culture and geography (Sanders 2002). Cultural dimensions of ethnicity include such elements as shared beliefs, practices, and traditions, culinary habits, speech patterns, religious practices, and other markers of difference that are generally acknowledged by both in-group and out-group members (Gans 1979; Waters 1990; Sanders 2002). Ethnic groups also tend to have a tie to a geographical place, whether this be land that the group actually occupies, or an imagined or nostalgic "old country" that the group may reference as a place of origin (Sanders 2002; Gans 1979).

Reed (1982, 1983) has argued that the southern regional identity, at least for white southerners, is analogous to an ethnic or "quasi-ethnic" identity – one rooted in ancestry and residential history in the South, born by a people sharing a culture and important characteristics and feeling different from non-southerners. The question now is whether this ethnic analogy still holds up more than a quarter century later. Also, and importantly, does the analogy hold for black southerners as well? In this chapter I will explore how well the ethnic analogy "fits" with my respondents' perceptions of their own regional identity.

Who are the "Real" Southerners?

Southerners by Birth – The Natives

Consistent with the Southern Focus Polls, which show that more than 75% of blacks and whites in the region identify as southern (Griffin et al. 2005), the vast majority of the respondents I interviewed claimed a southern identity. Out of a total of 65 respondents who were residents of the South, fifty-nine (90.8%) claimed to be southern, and only six (9.2%) rejected that identity. When asked why they self-identified as southern, most respondents asserted that they were southern by a combination of birth and longtime residence in the South. Doug Chambers (Baton Rouge, 25 years old, black):

> Q: Do you consider yourself to be a southerner?
>
> A: Yeah, yeah. Yeah I would have to (laughing). I was born and raised here, so obviously I'm a southerner.

Amelia Trudell (Marion, 49 years old, black):

> Q: And do you consider yourself to be a southerner?
>
> A: Yes. I've always lived in the South.

Betty Hilgurt (Nashville, 43 years old, white):

> Q: Do you consider yourself to be a southerner?
>
> A: Yes.
>
> Q: O.K. Why do you answer that way?
>
> A: Cause I was born in North Carolina and just raised on a family farm in, um, I just consider that the South.

These findings are not surprising and support the work of other scholars who have found that lifelong residence in the South is similar to an ethnic ancestry, making one

much more likely to claim a southern identity (Reed 1983; Griffin 2006). Of 59 self-professed southerners, fifty (84.7%) included birth and long-time residence in the South as a central reason they consider themselves to be southern. Birth and longtime residence in the South, however, are not the only factors that make one southern. Nine respondents (15.3%) claimed to be southern because of an embracement of the regional culture, irrespective of their place of birth. Even respondents who emphasized their birth in the region as evidence of their southern identity often mentioned a certain knowledge and appreciation for the regional culture that makes them southern as well. In response to the question of why he considers himself a southerner, William Lancaster (Marion, 46, white) stated:

> Born, raised in the South. I was brought up with the southern values, going to church, opening doors for ladies, "yes ma'am," "no ma'am," you know. Just brought up with that kind of upbringing.

Paul Madison, also of Marion (48, white), explicitly discussed his own southern identity in terms of regional culture:

> Q: What makes you a southerner?
>
> A: It's not a matter of what makes me a southerner, it's what is southern. To me southern is a culture. It's a state of mind, and it's a way of life… You can wrap southern up in about two or three different categories. One of them is honor. One of them is respect. Um, and the third one would have to be commitment. Honor from the standpoint, I'm one of those guys, I'm from the old school. I do not have to have a contract with you. If I tell you I'm going to do something, I'm going to be there. You know if something happens that I can't be there, you're going to know as soon as I know why I can't and what have you. Um there's, o.k., my, when I was growing up (chuckling), my parents sold the house I grew up in in 1975. Had to hunt a week to find the key to the front door. Never locked the house. Um, anybody needed to borrow anything at my house, they'd come and get it, never leave a note, and it would always come right back to where it was. You know, there was, it was, you won't find a true southerner that wouldn't give you the shirt off his back if he saw you needed it, and ninety percent of the time you won't even have to ask. That's a culture and an attitude that we don't have anymore.

For Paul Madison, the South embodies a culture that he appreciates and values, that he still tries to maintain, even though he fears that the southern way of life may be dying out. Conceptualizing the South as a culture means that to be southern one must learn that culture, be socialized into the often unspoken understandings of the region. This may be why many respondents point out that they were born *and raised* in the South, hinting at the importance of the formative years of childhood and early adulthood in instilling this culture within an individual. Gerald Tyson, a professor in Nashville (65, black), discusses why he sees himself as southern:

> A), I was born in the South. B), I came to adulthood in the South. That is, I was raised here. I was educated in the South. And as a result of that, of those things, I understand the nuances of the culture, and I think that is something that comes with regional attachment. And for those reasons, I consider myself a southerner.

On the whole, then, my respondents' self-identified "southernness" was based on birth and long-time residence in the South, along with a certain cultural understanding and appreciation of the region.

Of the six respondents who did not claim a southern identity, three did not consider themselves southern because they were born in other parts of the country. These respondents also seem to associate the identity with birth in the South. Kay Pearce (74, white) now lives in Baton Rouge, but grew up in California:

> Q: Do you consider yourself to be a southerner?
>
> A: A southerner? Well no. I tell people I'm from Long Beach, California, which is where I'm from. But no, I don't think I'm a southerner, but we've been here for many years.
>
> Q: How long have you been here?
>
> A: I guess 28 years.
>
> Q: Do you identify yourself based on residence in that other region? Like do you call yourself a westerner or anything like that?

A: I don't really call myself anything. I just tell people I'm basically from California.

Another longtime resident of the South also denies being southern based on her birth, though she indicates a bit more confusion about whether the identity applies to her.

Yolanda White (Nashville, 32, black):

Q: And do you consider yourself to be a southerner?

A: No, no (laughing). I mean not, I guess now, yes, because I've lived here for, since 1986. That's a long time. But people that, they don't think I'm a southerner. They act like I'm from somewhere else (laughing). So, so maybe not.

Q: Where were you born?

A: I was born in Detroit, Michigan.

Yolanda White seems more ambivalent about her regional identity as southern, first denying the identity, then momentarily claiming the identity based on having lived in the region for almost 20 years, but eventually concluding that she must not be southern, since other people do not perceive her as such.

This uncertainty about what makes one a southerner was not relegated solely to those who were born or raised in other parts of the country. A few respondents, all African American, who were reared in the South were not really sure if they would be considered southern. Out of 30 black respondents who were born and raised in the South, seven (or 23.3%) were uncertain about their regional identity or somewhat reluctant to claim it (though all seven of these respondents did eventually claim to be southern). As the following passage indicates, some black southerners had never really thought of themselves as southern.

Katrina Carston (Marion, 26):

Q: Do you consider yourself to be a southerner?

A: Yeah, I guess so.

> Q: And why do you think you are a southerner? What makes you a southerner?
>
> A: I would just say where I live. I mean, actually, I talked to my mom when I got off the phone with you, and I told her I didn't really think that we were considered the South, and she said we are. Because I was thinking like Mississippi and you know places like that was the South, but she said that we're considered South, so I don't know. I mean I consider, I mean from everybody else's perspective I am a southerner. Like where I'm from, when I talk to other people from different places, and they talk about my accent and stuff like that, so I guess I am southern, but that's not really what I base myself on is being just a southerner, so. I haven't really thought about it until you, you know, brought this up.

To Katrina, the mountains of North Carolina were not "the real" South, which is represented by the deep South, states like Mississippi. She only claimed the identity after her mother told her that the area around Marion was southern. So for this respondent, the identity of being southern does not seem to have much importance in her life. Southern identity seems to be more of a geographic designation – a place where you happen to live, not something you are.

On the other hand, Katrina does mention her accent as a cultural marker that encourages outsiders to view her as southern. Many scholars have noted that the southern accent is an indicator of one's regional identity (Killian 1970; Reed 1982; Ayers 1996; Griffin et al. 2005). Katrina's perception that others define her regional identity based on her accent seems to indicate that in some instances southern identity is imposed on an individual by others. She must be southern because others see her that way. Later in the interview I asked her about her accent:

> Q: Do people comment on your accent very much?
>
> A: Not now because I'm around here (laughing), but I'm sure if I went anywhere else they would because I have a real country accent.

Because she does not encounter many folks who comment on her accent, the subject of her southernness would rarely come up in routine social interactions and may explain why she never thought much about being southern.

Another African American respondent, Wanda Burgess (28) from Nashville, was also unsure whether she would be considered a southerner:

> Q: And do you consider yourself to be a southerner?
>
> A: (pause) I was reading that [the consent form] and I was trying to understand what a southerner is. Is it being born in the South?
>
> Interviewer: Really it's kind of your interpretation of what a southerner is…
>
> A: And see that's what I'm trying to get. I'm like, "Am I a southerner?" I live in the South, but I don't know if I would, you know, say I'm a southerner or not.
>
> Q: Were you born in the South?
>
> A: I was born here [in Nashville]. But I don't, I won't call myself a southerner.
>
> Q: Have you ever thought of yourself as a southerner?
>
> A: No, but other people, you know like, let's just say if I would go to another state up North, they would probably say I was, I'm a southerner, but I don't see it that way. Because when most people talk to me they're like, "you're actually from Nashville?" because I don't have that accent. So it's just, I don't know (laughing).

Wanda makes a statement very similar to Katrina. She is not sure what makes someone a southerner and has never really thought of herself as southern, but believes that those outside of the South would designate her as a southerner. Nonetheless, she still resists identifying with the region. She does not really feel southern. So even though others may impose a definition upon her as a southerner, she feels that she has the freedom to reject this identity. For some at least, southern identity seems to be a matter of choice. This notion of southern identity as, at least in part, discretionary has been noted by other scholars (Griffin 2006). However, how much choice is really involved may be misleading. Even though these respondents were uncertain about their identity, and at times denied they were southern, all seven eventually concluded that they were indeed

southern. So despite the identity being of little import to them, they felt compelled to claim it, perhaps in part due to the imposition of the identity by others.

This matter of imposition appears to be more relevant for African American respondents that for white respondents. No white respondents demonstrated uncertainty about whether they were southern. Out of 29 white respondents who were born and reared in the South, all but one claimed a southern identity. All of those claiming the identity based their assertion primarily on their birth and rearing the region. In contrast to some of the black respondents, no white respondents alluded to the idea that they were southern because other people saw them as such. So for these white southerners, imposition of a southern identity by others does not seem to come in to play. But, also of interest, the one white respondent who was born and raised in the South but rejected the identity (for political reasons) worked to get rid of his southern accent to make sure that others would not view him as southern. John Marshal (68) of Nashville:

> I was not interested in identifying as a southerner or someone from Alabama or whatever. My friends at Duke [University] were a mixture of people from the South and from the Northeast, but basically I was more interested in connecting with people from the Northeast. And in fact they made fun of what accent I had, so I got rid of it. And I never looked back.
>
> Q: How did you get rid of your southern accent?
>
> A: Well oddly enough I didn't have that much of one… And so when I got to Duke I only had a few things that were very southern, and my Northeastern friends would point them out to me. And I had enough of an ear that I could tell what they were talking about, so it didn't take very much. I just kind of deliberately said, well I'm not going to say things this way.

So while on the whole white southern respondents did not appear to claim to be southern because the identity was imposed on them by others, it is perhaps important for one who was born and raised in the region but wishes to reject the identity to remove markers that may expose him or her to the possibility of being perceived as southern.

Even though black respondents were more likely to show uncertainty about identifying with the region, only two black respondents who were born and raised in the South rejected the identity outright. One of these respondents, David Leary of Baton Rouge (age, 49), rejected the designation of southern, asserting instead that he was Creole (generally defined as a blending of French and black cultures in southern Louisiana), a more "local" and racially ambiguous identity. The other respondent rejected the identity based on cultural/political factors. I asked a young African American man in Nashville, Curtis Slocum (age, 25), about his regional identity:

> I consider myself being a person that's living in the South, basically. I wouldn't say that I'm a southerner, but I would just say that I'm just a person that lives in the South. I wouldn't call myself a southerner, actually.
>
> Q: Why don't you call yourself a southerner?
>
> A: Well just because I was, I was raised and born in the South, I believe that that doesn't make you a true southerner. From previous events, as far as history, and now, I don't think I qualify for that… A southerner would probably be someone who's values, who's moral ethics are different from today's ethics. In other words, they have been taught a certain way as far as, I don't want to say hatred, or slavery or anything like that, it's just that they have a different way, a way of thinking and a way of living and a way of how things should be.

Curtis feels that he can choose not to identify as a southerner, even though he was born and raised in the South. This choice seems to be based on feeling that his values are not the same as most southerners. It is a bit unclear precisely what he is rejecting, but it appears to involve the South's past, the racial prejudice in the South, and what he seems to perceive as a different, perhaps narrow-minded, way of thinking.

The tension between these elements of choice and constraint in identification with the South is particularly apparent in the words of Sandra Winters (aged 35), an African American woman in Baton Rouge who spent many years living in California, but has now returned to Louisiana:

> Q: So you don't consider yourself to be a southerner, correct?
>
> A: No (laughing). Even though I live in the South, and I'm raising my kids in the South, no I don't.
>
> Q: Do you consider yourself to be a Westerner or a person from California, or anything like that?
>
> A: Um, let me think here. When you put it like that, I have to consider myself to be a southerner because I was born here. I am from California, but that's not where I grew up. I grew up here, so. I don't like the classification, because this is not where I want to be. But yeah, I would have to consider myself to be a southerner.
>
> Q: What about being a southerner does not appeal to you?
>
> A: I don't know, I just, like I said I just don't, this is not where I want to be. So that's, you know if you're driving a car that you don't like, you don't consider yourself an owner of that car. You know you're driving say like a station wagon. You park your car in the parking lot, and everybody goes out and get into their fine cars, and you run to the station wagon. You're going to wait til everybody leave, right? (laughing) I mean it's just like, you just don't like it, you know. That's not you. That's not what you want. So that's how it is.

After considering things, Sandra declares that she must be southern if she was born and raised in the South, but this is not an identity that she wants to hold. This regional identity somehow does not seem to "fit" who she thinks she is, though it is unclear why[14]. By comparing this identity to an old car that one is embarrassed to drive, she indicates that the South is not who she is or where she wants to be. As she repeatedly told me in her interview, she would rather be back in California, where she used to live. In an interview with her husband, he echoed her remarks, often commenting that he, too, wished they were back in California.

Regional Migrants

Thus far I have dealt primarily with the identity claims of respondents who were born and raised in the South. It is also useful to look more closely at the identity claims

[14] For more on "fit" between individual southerners and their region, see Reed (1982) and Griffin (2006).

of individuals who were born and raised outside of the region. Once these folks migrate to the South, do they eventually adopt a southern identity? Griffin et al. (2005), using data from the Southern Focus Polls, found that 29% of non-southerners who migrate to the region do in fact claim a southern identity. In my study, six respondents were born and raised outside of the South. Of these six, three now claim to be southern, and three reject the identity. The three respondents who reject being southern do so primarily based on their being born outside the South. The number of years these folks have been in the region does not seem to affect their identity claims. Kay Pearce, who grew up in California, had been in Baton Rouge for 28 years, but did not see herself as southern. Mike Watson, born and raised in Illinois, had lived in Nashville for eight years, but thought of himself as from the Midwest. Finally, Yolanda White was born in Detroit, and despite having lived in the South since she was 13 years old (she is now 32), she also did not define herself as southern. All of these respondents cited birth outside the region as the reason for not claiming to be southern. However, there is an interesting similarity that all of these respondents had in common. All three respondents had no family or relatives from the South, and thus seemed to have no southern roots in their family ancestry.

Of the three respondents who were born and reared outside of the South and did claim a southern identity, two had family roots in the region. Leslie McSwain of Marion moved to the South when she was 11 years old from Delaware (she is now 21). She does not believe her parents would define themselves as southern, as they were both born and raised in Delaware. However, Leslie has grandparents and extended relatives who were born and still live in the mountains of North Carolina, giving her family ties to the South.

In addition, she always felt as a child visiting the region that she wanted to be southern. She felt that she "fit" in the South:

> Q: When you were growing up did you think of yourself as a southerner?
>
> Leslie: Not before I moved here (laughing). I think when we used to come and visit Burnsville [North Carolina] every summer, ever since I was probably in kindergarten, so I was a couple of years old, I, I wanted to be a southerner. Burnsville is such a small area, and we would come and visit, and I never wanted to leave. I just wanted to stay. So when we finally moved there I kind of just fit right in. And so at the age of 10 I really kind of just, well here I am, this is where I belong, so. I would say yeah I did consider myself a southerner.

It seems that Leslie claims a southern identity because this is a place she always loved. The South is where she wanted to be, and she had family here. Nakita Blackwell (age, 49, black) of Nashville also claimed a southern identity, even though she was born in Miami (which she did not consider the South) and raised in the Bahamas. She claimed that she must be southern now because she had lived most of her life in Nashville. She moved to Nashville in college and never left (she is now 49 years old). So for Nakita, long-time residence in the South accounts for her identity claim. However, it should also be noted that though her mother was born and raised in the Bahamas, her father was from Atlanta. All of her father's family were also in the Atlanta area. So again, her claim may also be affected by having a family history in the region.

The final respondent who was born and raised outside of the South, but now claims a southern identity, was originally from France. Brigitte Canning moved to Louisiana in 1957 and has lived there ever since (roughly 50 years). She asserted her southernness based on her long-time residence in the South. However, she also mentioned her love of the slow pace of life, the land, southern people, and the way folks in Louisiana cook and enjoy their food, which she associated with France. Again, it seems that she "fit" in the South.

These identity claims of respondents who were not born in the South, either rejection or embracement of southernness, are instructive. None who rejected the identity, despite how long they had been in the region, have family ties to the South. Those who did claim to be southern either had family roots in the South, felt that the region "fit" their personality, or a combination of the two. Both patterns emphasize the importance of regional family roots in identity claims.

Through these discussions with respondents about their own southern identity, I see a complex identity emerging, one that is both ascriptive, based on birth in the region, and achieved through socialization into a unique culture. Southern identity may be imposed on some, such as when outsiders consider an individual to be southern due to their accent, yet there is still some room for choice, as a few respondents who were born in the region asserted that they were not southern, or did not wish to be classified as southern, because the culture does not truly "fit" who they are (Reed 1983; Griffin 2006). In addition, some who were born outside of the South felt able to choose whether to accept or reject the identity. Imposition does not appear to affect the regional identity claims of white southerners to the same degree as black southerners, but it plays a particularly important role in the regional identity claims of black southerners who are initially uncertain about their own southernness. On the whole, however, the majority of respondents, both black and white, believe they are southern due to birth and rearing in the region, which permitted respondents to learn the culture of the South[15]. We turn now to what exactly southerners see as the content of that culture.

[15] There did not appear to be any strong differences in identity claims by such factors as region within the South, education, age, or urban versus rural environment.

Identity as Action – Cultural Practices of Southerners

Most of the people I interviewed described being southern as a culture, a way of thinking and a way of life. As such, my respondents have their own traditions and customs that they associate with the region. These cultural practices help define the group and create a sense of difference from people in other parts of the country. Many of these customs are intimately linked to a sense of history and place, family, and roots, and seem to act as a grounding for the type of regional "ethnicity" or "quasi-ethnicity" discussed by Reed (1982).

Food

More than any other cultural practice, food was emphasized by my respondents. They loved to talk about it. They told me about the food at their family reunion, the food at church, food on holidays, what they loved to eat every day, and what they wished they could still eat if it wasn't so bad for you. Many seemed proud of the culinary traditions in the South and took great pleasure in talking about their favorite southern foods. The importance of food as a means to express one's cultural identity has been noted by other scholars (see for example Waters 1990; Ferris 2004; Latshaw, forthcoming), and in the case of my respondents, food appeared to act as a means for them to express their southernness.

I asked respondents whether there were certain southern practices or customs that were a part of their daily life. Often, respondents seemed confused by this question, so I would prompt them by asking if they ate certain foods, listened to certain music, practiced their religion or celebrated holidays in a manner that they thought was

particularly southern. Forty-nine out of 58 self-described southerners (84.5%) believed that southern food was a unique part of the regional culture and a part of the culture that they incorporated into their lives. When asked about southern customs and practices, respondents often began their responses by discussing food.

Larry Carpenter (Nashville, 55, black):

> I'm very much into the food of the South.
>
> Q: What types of food do you associate with it?
>
> A: Greens most certainly would be one. Cornbread, potato salad, macaroni and cheese, all of these kinds of things. Black eyed peas, corn, and my wife cooks all these dishes. You know she's very good at it. Catfish, chicken, you know, that kind of thing.

Julien Scott (Baton Rouge, 58, black):

> I like grits (laughing). I don't, can't eat that bacon anymore. I love bacon and eggs, but uh, when you get old and your triglycerides go up and your cholesterol, you have to cut that stuff out, so I'm on an oatmeal diet. You know I just, I like the food. I think the food's the most thing that I enjoy, southern food. Churches and Popeye's didn't have anything on my grandmother's fried chicken (laughing). That was like a treat, get that fried chicken. You know the dishes, the food that they have, smothered chicken and stuff like that.

Often the foods that people thought of as southern in Louisiana and Marion, NC, had a certain local flavor. In Louisiana, when asked about southern food, people spoke of Cajun cooking, seafood, and spicy traditional dishes. When asked what kinds of food she thinks of as southern, Grace Connors (83, black) replied:

> Mustard greens and cornbread. Gumbo, shrimp, crabs, all that kind of stuff.

Doug Chambers (25, black) talked about how the food in Louisiana is distinctly southern, different from other places:

> It's mainly the food. I've traveled other places and it's just, the food, there's no where else like it. My little brother, he moved to Maryland for a couple of months, and the food was so different that he really couldn't eat it. His first couple of weeks there he lost like five pounds, because he was so used to eating like southern, southern food, southern Louisiana food. So, and my brother, another brother moved to Colorado, and he's dropped so much weight because, you know, he's used to eating the southern cuisine that we eat down here. So that was a huge change for him, getting accustomed to different

> types of food, and you know different types of seasoning and flavor that different parts of the country have. Because he went to the supermarket to buy like, down here we have entire aisles dedicated to seasoning, and up in Colorado all they have is salt and pepper. So that was a big change for him.

Doug Chambers conflates the more particularized spicy southern food of Louisiana with southern food in general. This food is seen as unique to the South, and so different in fact that his brothers had difficulty adjusting to the foods in other parts of the country.

In Marion, North Carolina, located on the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains, many folks spoke of livermush as a distinctly southern food; however this food was not mentioned in the other parts of the South where I conducted interviews and seems to be particular to this area of the region[16]. For example, Amanda Coble (30, white) speaks of livermush as a part of southern culture:

> Q: Do you think being born and raised here is an important part of being southern?
>
> A: You know I do. I think just because they're, just like you know what livermush is or whatever, that's because of where you were born and that's how you, so you end up, it's not necessarily that there's anything wrong with moving to the South, yeah but I think you have to, to really be a southerner I think you have to be from the South. You have to have been born and raised here most of your life.

Amanda speaks of livermush as a part of southern culture that one would not be aware of unless he or she had intimate knowledge of the South through having been born and raised in the region. In this passage, we see both the particular local flavor of mountain food as being equated with southerners in general, as well as the tendency to link food with a southern identity. Cooking southern foods, eating southern foods, and sharing knowledge of southern foods with outsiders is an important way for people to express and

[16] For the uninitiated, livermush is made from hog liver, head parts, cornmeal, and spices that are cooked into a loaf. Often referred to as "poor man's pate," it is traditionally cut into slices that are fried in a skillet.

enact their regional identity as southerners. Paul Madison (Marion, 48, white) tells this story about eating grits:

> I've driven a truck all over this country, o.k. Um, alright, let's take eating grits for instance. There was a little truck stop in Pennsylvania that I used to go in and sit down and eat breakfast at. I'd walk in the door, and after about the third trip in the door, this little ole lady had come walking up with a bowl and a coffee pot full of hot water, because I always ate grits for breakfast. And, you know, she tried to offer me hashbrowns three or four times. I took her some instant grits one time, and she, she informed me that she couldn't deal with those things. I said fine, I'll carry my own, you just give me the water (laughing). You know, they had good coffee, good sausage and eggs, but I got to have my grits.

By going to such effort and making the point of eating grits at a truck stop in Pennsylvania, Paul was sending the clear message that he was a southerner. When he carried along his own instant grits, he was in a sense also carrying along a tangible indicator of his southern identity.

Peter Nelson (21, white) of Nashville talks about his affinity for southern food and his appreciation of southern traditions that he sees as encapsulated in these foods:

> I like specifically southern foods, like sweet tea. And not because it tastes that much better than any other drink, but because it does have a southern tradition to it, and fried chicken, catfish, the basic southern foods. I don't eat those exclusively, I don't eat them very often, any more than any other food, but whenever I do eat them I do recognize their, just the tradition of their being southern foods.

For Peter, it seems that by eating southern foods, though he may not even eat them that often, he feels and experiences his southern identity. Making a point to deliberately eat southern foods helps link him to the South and its traditions. In Peter's case, his strong identification as a southerner drives him to eat southern food[17].

Though not all of my southern respondents were as adamant about their food choices as Peter Nelson and Paul Madison, who both consciously chose to eat certain foods as an expression of their southernness, roughly a quarter of my respondents (15 out

of 59 southerners) did say that they tended to think of themselves as southern when they were cooking or eating a southern meal. Amelia Trudell (49, black) in Marion tells of the times she thinks of herself as southern:

> I guess basically, a lot of times like I said, gave for an example, whenever you say something rude about somebody, you know, it's like and then you say, "bless their heart," you know, I'm like that's something southern people do. And um, like when, which I'm guilty of not doing this anymore, a lot of times you know southern people they always bake biscuits and cornbread, you know. Or when you fix what we deem a southern meal, you know, as far as like pinto beans and cornbread and slaw and, I mean you know at times like that you reflect, oh that's a southern thing, you know. Uh, or even when you're fixing oatmeal, I mean not oatmeal, uh when you're frying livermush, cause I know some of the people, the few that I do know from up North a lot of times they would say, "well what is livermush?" (laughing) So at times like that. It's just little ole day to day things that you do that, it makes you reflect that this is a southern act.

Again, the act of cooking and eating southern food reminds people of their regional identity and serves to differentiate them from other regions, most importantly the North. Many southerners seem to enjoy this feeling of distinction and the carrying on of traditions. They feel special when they are able to share what is seen as their unique culture with others through the foods they eat. When I asked Patty Simpson (age, 24), from Baton Rouge, about why southern identity is important to her, she spoke of the pleasure she feels when she cooks a traditional Cajun meal for those outside of the region:

> Q: How important to you is being a southerner?
>
> A: It's very important to me. I'm glad to be from the South. I don't want to be from anywhere else (laughing).
>
> Q: What, can you think of what specifically kind of makes it so important to you, or what things you really draw from…?
>
> A: I like having I guess a story to tell. You know people ask you where you're from, "Oh, I'm from South Louisiana." They're like, "Oh, you have this kind of stuff down there, and what's the food like, and what's this like," and being able to tell people about where I'm from, as opposed to just, "Oh yeah, I'm from Minnesota," (laughing) you

[17] For more on the link between food and the expression of regional identity, see Latshaw's forthcoming paper (2007) in *Southern Cultures*.

> know, or something like that. It's just, it's not as much fun to tell people about if you're not from down here I don't think.
>
> Q: Can you think of any times in your life when it's been more important or less important, anything stand out to you?
>
> A: Just, not specific times, just interacting with people that aren't from here. Going up to Indiana and bringing some of, a little piece of South Louisiana there, like Community coffee, you know. The best coffee in the world. They don't have it up there. We take it with us. Or fixing, you know, fixing a Cajun meal for, or a South Louisiana traditional meal, for someone who's never had it before. Telling people about eating crawfish, you know, things like that. Just, just sharing the culture with other people that aren't from here.

Being southern makes Patty feel special and different. By sharing a southern meal with outsiders, or taking southern coffee with her when she visits relatives in Indiana, Patty is able to share her regional culture with others, generating a feeling of pride for her area.

From these excerpts we can see how southern identity is deliberately expressed through the culinary practices of the South. Southern foods link people to their regional identity. But the foods of the South represent more than a simple reminder of difference. The foods also tie respondents to their family roots in the region (Waters 1990; Ferris 2004). Eating southern foods reminds people of their childhood, or in some cases represents a sense of home and family, of comfort. As will be discussed later, the sense and appreciation of family is very much seen by respondents as a hallmark of southern life.

When respondents talked of food, they often made reference to their mothers or grandmothers, remembering what they ate as a child and speaking in turns of a nostalgic past, a past remembered fondly.

Linda Dobbs (Marion, 43, white):

> Foods, oh yes. Butter beans, fried chicken, biscuits, you know I'm thinking of everything my grandmother always cooked. There was always lemonade and syrupy sweet tea.

Jennifer Dartmouth (Nashville, 54, white), talking about southern customs:

> … the little customs of food, having certain foods, chess pie, turnip greens, corn, white bread, all really strong foods that I associate with the South that, that are real important, you know, to fix those special dishes that I relate to something that I always had as a child.

Patty Simpson (Baton Rouge, 24, white) speaks of carrying on the family tradition of cooking southern food:

> Cooking is a big deal in our family. My mom, and Paw Paw, and then of course me. And it's always got a southern flair to it. Cayenne pepper's there somewhere, in everything I cook.

And Betty Richardson (Marion, 48, white):

> … you always love the foods you're grown, you're raised with. You know, that's, that's what's always, you're always looking for and wanting.

The tie of food to family seems to be summed up in the term sometimes used to describe southern food, "home cooking." Real southern food is made from scratch, using fresh vegetables, by people who are cherished. Marge Mayfield (31, black) from Marion talks about the importance of fresh food in the South, grown in your own garden:

> It's supposed to be southern food, but I guess it's good home cooking from natural, you know we have our own gardens. So to me that's southern. You know not having to have processed or it shipped in all the time. It's went away but, and I hate that. I do. I hate that because I can remember when every home I went to had a garden, had chickens laying eggs, had a horse or something, you know, and now you just don't see it.

Marge worries that this tradition is dying out, that people in the South no longer raise their own food as much. So again it seems that this notion of "home cooking" harkens back to an earlier, nostalgic, and fondly remembered time of her youth.

Tyler Sanders (age, 54), an African American man from Nashville, speaks of home cooked foods when he describes large family dinners:

> Most Christmases we usually go to my aunt's. The tradition is for my aunt and my mother to fix dinner. And they generally do this from scratch. And usually we'd have maybe twenty or thirty people for dinner. The remarkable thing about this is my aunt is 86, and my mother is 83. And these two ladies get together and fix a dinner from scratch for all of these people. Chittlins is one of the things that is served as a tradition, cause it's something that blacks had as food during slavery. I mean that was one of the

> few things that was available. The ribs, the poorest cuts of the meat like ribs, and the intestines, the chittlins. So as a tradition they generally, at Thanksgiving and Christmas, have chittlins, because they remind you of what the situation was at that time. You have turkey, ham, and all this stuff, but that's the one thing, that as well as souse. That's something that they usually make also, because they made it when they were growing up. Those things are traditionally southern. I doubt that, except for the people who have migrated from the South [to the North], that's not something that they [people in the North] would be serving, chittlins (laughing). That as well as the sweet potato pie would be southern. Cornbread stuffing is southern. Just the meal itself has traditional things that are southern.

The comments of Tyler Sanders touch on several themes discussed already – the notion of food as a source of southern identity or expression of southernness, and the tie of food to family and tradition. But for some, food in the South has an even deeper meaning. For Tyler Sanders and his family, certain foods are purposely served to remember the hardships and poverty that African Americans in the South endured. Thus for some African Americans in the South, food is used to reaffirm a collective racial identity forged through the struggles experienced in this region.

The tie of black collective identity to southern food is most clearly seen in the difficulty some blacks had in distinguishing southern food from what they traditionally see as black food, or soul food. Soul food is eaten by blacks in all parts of the country, but as many African American respondents note, it originated in the South and was carried by blacks to other regions of the country. Rebecca Laster (age, 23), a black college student in Nashville who self-identified as southern, asked for a copy of the interview questions before we spoke. She discussed some questions with her friends before the interview, and relays this story:

> That was another confusing one [a confusing question], because I couldn't distinguish which was southern and which was black, because a lot of my black friends that I talk to that are, like at school, on the track team, you know we were talking about the questions, they're like, I was like "oh well this, this is southern," some of the white people would say, "this is southern." And then they would say, "no boo, that's black. We do that up North, too." And it's like, well what's southern and what's black, because so many, most black people in America came from the South, and then when they were transplanted to

> the North, they kept those same southern customs. So what's a southerner, what is black? The line is really blurred.

Wanda Burgess (Nashville, 28, black) also tries to sort out the difference between southern food and soul food:

> As far as food, I would say more people in the South like to fry food. They like to eat a lot of pork, compared to people in the North and even on the West coast. Um, traditionally in my family I would say a lot of pork (laughing), and a lot of I guess what we would call southern black food. You know, like the turnip greens, like soul food, turnip greens and, you know, you eat barbeque with everything, or chicken with everything. I think chicken, if we're going to use southern, chicken is like a southern food.
>
> Q: Do you think of what you consider soul food as southern food, or as something you associate with African Americans?
>
> A: I would have to say African American because I know people up North who are African American and they do the same thing, so I can't say that it's just southern. Or even people like who live in Los Angles that I know, from a totally different background, having known them or just met them, you go over to their house, it's the same thing you're eating, as if I would be at home. So I would say that would probably be African American compared to southern.

It seems that southern food is so much a part of the black community across the country, as represented by the term "soul food," that for some it is simply seen as what black people do, as opposed to being seen as southern. So the food may be less of a reminder of southern identity than it is a reminder of black identity more generally, or perhaps more specifically, the continuing tie of black identity to the South. Of course to truly explore this possible tie one would need to speak with African Americans in the North to see if they linked "soul food" with the South. Latshaw (forthcoming), analyzing Southern Focus Poll data, finds that African Americans throughout the country seem to have a special affinity for southern food and suggests that African Americans may see southern food as a link to their cultural identity and past. One African American respondent in Nashville said explicitly that, "soul food is southern food," but for some the

line between what is black and what is southern may be less clear, as indicated by the excerpts above.

At least for some of my African American respondents, it appears that southern food, or soul food, is a source of communal identity. It represents the ties of black southerners to the struggles of the past, as well as the tie of all African Americans to their southern roots. Food also acts more generally as an expression of southern identity for both blacks and whites, because culinary practices are linked to the history of poverty experienced by both races in the region. These findings give some support to C. Vann Woodward's articulation of southern identity. Woodward suggested that contemporary southern identity is based in part on the collective experience of poverty in the region (Woodward 1960). There was a general theme throughout the interviews that the South is a region where people faced hardship and struggle, particularly with poverty and meeting the basic needs of survival. Sixteen out of 59 self-described southerners (27%) in my sample linked their southern identity and pride in the region with the notion that southerners have had to struggle[18].

At times food is used to represent this struggle. We saw this in Tyler Sander's discussion of traditional southern foods that his family cooks on holidays, which were often the poorer cuts of meats, such as ribs and chittlins. Paul Madison in Marion described the tradition of eating livermush as originating from a "waste nothing, want nothing" mentality. Many in south Louisiana spoke about the tradition of eating crawfish. Patty Simpson pointed out that some make fun of people in south Louisiana for eating "mudbugs," a term used to describe crawdads and crawfish that are seen as "dirty,

[18] African Americans were slightly more likely to link their southern identity to this notion of struggle. Ten African Americans discussed hardship and struggle in the South, as compared to six white southerners.

trashy stuff," food, in other words, that only poor people would eat. Kristen Lerner (60, black), formerly of Marion and now living in Pennsylvania, spoke of the southerners as being able to "stretch a meal and add another plate to the table" if needed.

Some of my respondents discussed the southern art of vegetable gardening, also linking this tradition with the history of poverty in the South. For these respondents, gardening was linked to the idea that southerners are a hardy people who can make due with little and can sustain their families without needing handouts or government aid. Southerners are survivors. A respondent in Louisiana, Shonda Murphy (57, black), articulated this idea best:

> They do live below the poverty line in the South, and do a better job of it than they can any place else. When you're living below the poverty line in other areas, you would probably be homeless or in a shelter. Like say in Detroit, or where there is snow all the time, they probably don't know, they don't have the space or anything either to help themselves by growing a little garden and doing the things that you can do in the South. I think it's applied survival skills that makes a difference in people. And I think in the South people tend to use them more. You know I do a little garden myself, but it's because of the way we were raised. And over a period of a year if you do bell peppers, all those you don't eat, put them in the freezer. So that's, those are things that I think southern people are taught and can apply more than, than people that [live in other regions], because in other regions of the country, I think the only thing that happens is when the handouts run out there is nothing else.

Having gardens in the South represents a sense of self-sufficiency; no matter how poor you are, you can still eat. Shonda describes people in other regions as not having the skills, land, or climate to plant gardens like they do in the South. So if times are hard in the North, you have to rely on the government. Part of southern identity seems to be this sense of pride in being able to make it through tough times, because southerners, both black and white, have seen so many hard times. Marge Mayfield (age, 31), a black woman in Marion, fears that the art of gardening in the South is declining. She talks of how she wants to keep this tradition of gardening alive and pass it on to her children so that they will know how to survive:

> I can remember [when] every home I went to had a garden, had chickens laying eggs, had a horse or something. Now you just don't see it. My daddy, he still tries to keep a little small something. Aunt Eunice, you know, they can't even work theirs this year. My granddaddy, my mama kind of helps him… That is something I want my kids to have knowledge of. I don't want them to ever think that if they don't have a lot of money that they can't have a lot of food. You don't have to have money to have food.

The cultural practice of cooking and eating southern foods thus provides a rich example of how such a practice functions to evoke a sense of collective and social identity. Southern culinary traditions are a source of regional pride, a link to the history of the South, a tie to family and past generations, and provide a means for southerners to express their regional identity, to feel southern. Latshaw (forthcoming) links southern food to cultural memory and discusses the power of southern food to "evoke reminiscences of childhood, stir up emotions from the past, and aid southerners in creating new memories around the dining table." Many respondents lament that they can no longer cook or eat traditional southern foods on a regular basis because many of these foods are simply bad for one's health. People from all parts of the South spoke of their attempts to move away from southern cooking for health reasons.

Lisa Harrison (Nashville, 41, white):

> I struggle against the way I ate as a child, with ham hocks in the green beans and all those things that are so terrible, that were built around people who worked outside all the time and therefore their cholesterol was all cleaned out. You know I'd rather eat cornbread than probably anything else on earth. And I struggle with the food issues. I think my children are not growing up quite, food-wise, as southern because we just realize it's not as healthy.

Julien Scott (Baton Rouge, 58, black) talks of how he ate as a child:

> We killed, when we were raising hogs, we killed our own hogs. You know we processed everything, made boudin, hoghead cheese and stuff. You know we don't do that anymore because we can't eat that stuff. It will kill you (laughing).

Lawrence Jennings (Nashville, 59, black) talks of how his diet has changed:

> If you looked at [my] household, a lot of culinary preferences in the house tend to be much more cosmopolitan than southern. I mean we certainly don't spend a lot of time

> eating classical southern meals because they in some ways are less healthy than other ways of eating. So I'm not going to eat as much fried chicken as I either prefer or used to.

As Americans, and southerners, learn more about healthy ways to eat and become more health conscious, it is possible that southern ways of cooking and eating may change, and traditional southern cooking may decline. But at present, it still seems that for most southerners these food practices are closely tied with their regional identity.

This extended discussion of food practices in the South, and the meaning of these practices for southern identity, demonstrates how a cultural practice can evoke and express one's social identity. I will only briefly discuss some interesting findings concerning other cultural practices in the South.

Holidays

On the whole, most of my respondents did not think that holidays were celebrated in the South any differently than the rest of the United States. Families tend to get together in the South on holidays, eat turkey on Thanksgiving, put up Christmas trees, and have large meals together – and most feel that these traditions are the same everywhere. Some respondents, not surprisingly in light of the previous discussion, did point out that southerners like to eat certain foods on holidays that are associated with the region. Respondents spoke of home cooked meals with black-eyed peas, greens, ham, fried turkeys, fried chicken, and so forth. In Louisiana, some foods were included as southern food which may be unique to this particular area, such as the tradition of eating crawfish on Easter. To my surprise, only one respondent mentioned the southern tradition of eating black eyed peas and collard greens on New Year's Day – a tradition that my family, and many friends, still follow.

Interestingly, a few respondents (seven of the 59 self-described southerners) were unsure if their ways of celebrating holidays were southern because they had no experience celebrating holidays in other regions. Betty Hilgurt (43, white) from Nashville declared that, "I'm so southern that I don't even know what's affiliated with it." Similarly, when Teresa West (69, black) was asked if any southern customs were a part of her daily life, she replied, "I don't really think of it as southern, I don't think. I just do what I do." I thought that those living in Marion, a more rural area and hence perhaps a bit more provincial, would be more likely to have difficulty distinguishing southern holiday practices from other regions; however, there appeared to be no variation by sub-region within the sample.

A handful of respondents in Baton Rouge and Marion did identify two holidays as uniquely southern: Mardi Gras, mentioned by three respondents in Baton Rouge, and Decoration Day[19], celebrated in the mountains of North Carolina and mentioned by two respondents. However, considering these data at least, these holidays seem to be celebrated only in particular areas of the South. So here again, much like with food, respondents tend to generalize their unique, localized tradition to the entire southern region.

Some respondents considered family reunions as a holiday. And even when not specifically termed a "holiday," numerous respondents mentioned reunions throughout their interviews. Family reunions are seen as a southern tradition, based on the notion expressed by many self-identified southern respondents (25 out of 59, or 42.4%) that

[19] For those unfamiliar with Decoration Day, as I was, it is generally celebrated on a Sunday in August. Families go to the cemeteries where their relatives are buried and put flowers on the graves. Sometimes a service is held in honor of the deceased.

families are more important to southerners than folks in other regions[20]. Claire Kendall (Baton Rouge, 74, white) talks about family reunions in the South:

> I think also in the South we have a lot more reunions. You just don't realize that other, in so many parts of the country they don't have reunions like we do. Now as long as my husband's mother lived, we had four reunions a year. Now we have one a year. But she loved them, and so, um, she even died on the Easter reunion that we had in the spring. She died that very day. I said, "Well, there's nothing that she would have liked better," because she knew everybody was coming that day. And uh, like she died that morning, and we had a, we continued with the reunion, but we didn't, you know, we were seeing about the funeral and all that. We didn't have our regular reunion because of that, but we were together at that time. And uh, but she loved reunions.

Larry Carpenter (Nashville, 55, black) talks of the specific importance of family reunions in the black community:

> I haven't studied this, but I would bet you that most of family reunions, particularly with respect to African Americans, occur in the South. You know I watch that every year. And some, a lot of our ancestors migrated to the North, and it's very difficult to find an African American in the North who doesn't have deep roots, family roots or ancestral roots, in the South. So I think family reunions occur in the black community on a larger scale in the South.

For African Americans, family reunions may have even more significance, as it represents a home coming of sorts for those who left the region and now live in the North. The fall 1993 Southern Focus Poll does show that 72.9% of black respondents, compared to 62.7% of white respondents, feel that southerners are more family-oriented[21]. Perhaps African Americans see the South, even more so than whites, as a place where family is important, and where their family roots lie. To fully explore the possibility that northern blacks still have a deep connection to the South, one would need to interview African Americans living in the North. Examination of the Southern Focus Polls does show that African Americans living outside the South are more likely to claim a southern identity than whites living outside the South (19.7% of blacks compared to

[20] According to data from the 1993 Southern Focus Poll, 75.3% of southerners and 67.2% of non-southerners believe that southern people are more family-oriented (N=1162). See table 3f in Appendix A.

5.8% of whites). For them the South may represent a home and a sense of cultural heritage, particularly since ties to Africa seem distant and perhaps less relevant. This would contradict the often-held notion that southern identity is solely the claim of whites (Griffin et al. 2005).

A handful of African American respondents talked of the observance of Juneteenth as a means for blacks to celebrate their heritage as southerners. Larry Carpenter of Nashville explains this holiday:

> Juneteenth is one holiday that I've seen southerners, African Americans in the South, celebrate increasingly. Juneteenth being June 19th, the date on which the slaves in Texas found out that they were free.

And Donna Levert (Nashville, 49) spoke of the importance of this holiday in the black community:

> I think the little things they have, the celebrations and events they have in the South, like Juneteenth and all of those things that really are a reminder of what happened, are an appropriate way of dealing with them [the heritage of black southerners]. Sometimes if you have things that are white this and black this, people see those as excluding people. But I don't know that I agree with that if you are commemorating and memorializing stuff that is an important part of your past. It's just the way that I think you term it and you phrase it. And I'm not threatened by people celebrating white culture, because I think to the extent that you celebrate anything in this culture that you call American is a celebration of white culture, they just don't call it that. They say it's American. So, and they ought to call it sometimes what it is (laughing), because it's not, it's not, you know a lot of American stuff is just white, white culture. But see I don't have a problem with people having Asian-American, Mexican this, no, that's not a problem. So to the extent that black people have black cultural events that remind them of what their past has been, and what they should always be on the lookout for in the future, then I'm comfortable with that.

For this respondent, celebrations like Juneteenth are a way for blacks to honor and remember the struggles of African Americans in the South throughout history, a way to begin dealing with the past in this region. It is doubtful, however, that the observance of Juneteenth is widespread in the South. Only three of my black respondents mentioned

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[21] These statistics include both southerners and non-southerners, due to the small number of southern blacks

this holiday, and all three lived in Nashville, had professional degrees, and were a part of the upper-middle class. This segment of the black community may be more well-versed in the history of African Americans in the South and more self-consciously express their racial or regional identity through observance of this holiday. Further, based on the responses of these three individuals, it is unclear whether the observance of this holiday is the expression of their racial identity, their regional identity, or some combination thereof.

Note also that Donna Levert speaks of "American" cultural celebrations as truly being celebrations of white culture. Her assertion is quite similar to the insight noted by many scholars of the South that what is "southern" is often also implicitly white, even if people do not say it (Cobb 1999a; Griffin 2000). The stronger attraction that southern culture seems to have for white southerners may reflect the need of these whites to express a sense of racial or ethnic identity without overtly acknowledging this need. For African Americans in the South, celebrating what is "southern" may be less important if southernness is linked to whites, either consciously or unconsciously. I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 5.

Interestingly, southern holidays that have been traditionally associated with the white South, such as Confederate Memorial Day, Robert E. Lee's Birthday, and Jefferson Davis's Birthday, were only mentioned by one respondent, who is a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. This respondent talked of an upcoming celebration of Confederate Memorial Day in North Carolina. The observance of these holidays, at least among my respondents, appears no longer an important part of southern identity for white

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in the sample with which to compare southern whites.

southerners (or blacks for that matter). Perhaps the (white) South is no longer as obsessed with the Civil War as it is often perceived to be.

Music

When discussing music, respondents did not go into as much depth as when talking about other cultural practices. Compared to food or the observance of holidays, music did not seem to be as important a component of southern identity. But certain patterns did emerge. Roughly half of my respondents did not see the music that they listened to as particularly southern, even if others might consider it to be. For example, many respondents mentioned liking gospel music or country, but did not associate this music with the South. These findings support the work of Griffin (2006a), who, using both the Southern Focus Polls and the General Social Survey, found few regional differences in taste in music for either whites or blacks. Because both southerners and non-southerners tend to like the same music, respondents may not see their musical tastes as regionally distinctive.

Though Griffin did not find many regional differences in musical preferences, he did find quite significant differences in the types of music that African Americans and whites preferred (Griffin 2006a). Some of my respondents did think of their music as southern, but musical preferences were sharply divided by race, again supporting the findings of Griffin. White respondents associated country and bluegrass music, and occasionally southern rock, with the South. Black respondents were more likely to associate gospel music, spirituals, blues, and jazz with the South. For black southerners, the music most often mentioned was gospel (in fact, no white respondents discussed

gospel music). While many respondents described gospel music as southern, others were not so sure. The following exchange with Marge Mayfield (Marion, 31, black) offers an example:

> Q: What about the music you listen to? Do you think of it as southern?
>
> A: I like gospel.
>
> Q: Do you think of gospel as southern?
>
> A: I hope it's all over. I mean so no, I don't. I hope it's throughout the whole little earth, the globe (laughing).

Amelia Trudell (49, Marion, black) had not really thought of her music as southern, but decided that it must be:

> Q: What about the music that you listen to? Do you think of that as southern in some way?
>
> A: Um, I really hadn't put it, looked at it as putting it in the categories, but I do listen to what's classified as southern gospel music, but you know, it's just that I was raised listening to the gospel music and it's passed down. I know you told me as far as southern culture, it's just a culture within myself and my family. It's like throughout the week, well I've started, I basically listen to gospel music all the time, but in our house it's like the girls, during the week they listen to their radio stations, but it's just a southern thing, and it was kind of like in the neighborhood where I grew up, on Sundays you always listened to gospel music on the radio. You turned it to the station and that was like, that's what played Sunday morning was the gospel music. And that's like, even now the girls, like Janice, they get up on Sundays they turn on the gospel music cause that's just the way it's supposed to be. But that's just an in house, I guess family southern tradition.

On the whole, it did not seem that gospel music acted as a strong grounding for southern identity among black respondents. Although many black southerners listen to gospel, and when queried some saw it as southern, they did not discuss gospel as a source of regional pride or difference. And often, rather than being viewed as an exclusively southern phenomenon, gospel music was associated with the black religious experience. Of ten black southerners who mentioned listening to gospel music, eight (80%) stated that they

did not think of gospel as southern music. This sentiment is expressed in the following exchange with Joseph Freedom (88), an African American man in Marion:

> Well in my race, well we like the singing. We like good gospel singing, yeah. Quartet, gospel, mostly gospel singing, yeah.
>
> Q: Do you tend to think of that as a southern thing or an African American kind of thing, or both?
>
> A: Well, well I think it has [to do with] black people because they love to sing (laughing). Whether it's northerners, black people just love to sing. And we give them credit for knowing how to sing.

One respondent, who travels around the mountains and some parts of the South singing and playing gospel music, made a distinction between what she termed "southern gospel" music and "soul gospel." Teresa West (Marion, 69, black):

> I know there is this southern gospel music that a lot of people like. I don't particularly like southern gospel. I like soul gospel (laughing). But there is some southern gospel that I like. I just like music.
>
> Q: Where does the soul gospel come from?
>
> A: Mainly black, the black experience. It's the beat. It's a difference in the beat. The clap, the southern gospel is basically the off-clap, and soul gospel is steady on-beat.
>
> Q: And the southern gospel, you said you associate the soul gospel with the black experience, do you associate the southern gospel with white experience?
>
> A: Mostly. Of course I have some friends, some white friends that like soul gospel, and I have some black friends that like southern gospel. Some, some black people sing like, have the country sound. It's not, it's rare, but they do have, and that is sort of like the southern gospel.
>
> Q: When you think of southerners, do you tend to think of southerners as whites, or both whites and blacks? Do you associate a particular race when you hear the word southerner?
>
> A: Um, maybe mostly white. Because there are more whites than there are blacks.

In the course of the interviews it appeared that respondents, particularly black respondents, had a tendency to associate things "southern" with whites (this will be discussed in more detail later). So the association of "southern gospel" with whites may

be linked to this tendency, as Teresa makes more explicit at the end of this exchange. "Soul gospel," somewhat like soul food, is associated with blacks. So here again, we have some indication of an intertwining of what is southern and what is black. Black respondents were the only ones to talk about gospel music in the interviews, but respondents were mixed as to whether gospel is southern music or black music. Survey data reveal that gospel music is one of the most popular musical genres for African Americans throughout the country (Griffin 2006a, 2006b). The question is, do they see gospel music as tied to the South and their roots in the South? Interviews with African Americans in other regions would be needed to assess whether gospel music is consciously linked to black experiences in the South.

The discussion of culinary preferences, family reunions, and the celebration of holidays, and music demonstrates how southern identity is expressed through different cultural practices, creating a sense of uniqueness and difference between southerners and non-southerners. Food practices appear to be one of the strongest distinctions that southern respondents view as a marker of uniqueness and identity. The celebration of holidays and music are viewed by some respondents as "southern," but many do not see significant regional differences in these events. These data also include discussion of such practices as religion, language and speech patterns, and sports; however, none of these phenomena, even, somewhat surprisingly, religion, were discussed in depth by most respondents.

Passing it on – The Generational Transmission of Southern Identity

On the whole, respondents tend to talk about southernness as a culture, a way of life, rooted in a geographic place. Perceptions of difference between southerners and folks from other regions involve a sense that southern people understand the culture in this region, such as southern patterns of speech, interaction, preferences in food and music, values such as the importance of family and religion, and so forth. Being southern is not seen as something encoded in the genes of southerners. Southerners, in other words, do not see themselves as differing from people of other regions in terms of such things as looks, hair color, skin tone, or any other physical features. So being southern is perceived as a cultural designation, again based on place, rather than a biological designation. As such, how is southernness passed along from one generation to the next? Are there deliberate attempts to instill a sense of southernness in the young people of the region? Do parents feel that it is important to pass this culture along to the next generation?

Ancestry

In order to explore these questions, I began by asking respondents about their ancestors. Were their ancestors also southerners, and does having southern ancestors relate to whether or not respondents claimed a southern identity? The overwhelming majority of respondents who answered the question on ancestry could trace their roots back at least two generations on both sides to the South, and most could trace their roots in the South back much farther. Of 56 responses to this question, only seven respondents could not trace their heritage back to the South on both sides. Of these seven, two

respondents were not certain where their ancestors originated and identified weakly as southern. Four respondents had one side of the family with deep roots in the South (two generations back or more), and one side of the family that originated outside of the South. Of these four respondents, two identified readily as southern, while the other two were less sure if they would consider themselves southern. Only one respondent, Yolanda White, came from families on both sides that originated in the North, and she did not claim a southern identity, even though she had lived in Nashville since she was 13 (she is now 32)[22].

The responses of these seven respondents suggest that individuals either less familiar with their roots in the South or who do not trace both sides of their families to the South are less likely to make strong identity claims as southerners. For example, Darren (39, black) and Sandra Winters (35, black), a married couple in Baton Rouge, were both uncertain about their family history (though both were born in Louisiana in a nearby parish). Darren informed me that he never traced his roots and did not know about the origin of his ancestors. Sandra was also unsure about her family history, saying that they were probably "here [in the South] from the beginning," then going on to say that "they were in Texas, and a lot of them were in California. I'm not sure about where else, but I know Texas and California." On the whole she seemed unsure about her ancestry. Neither Darren nor Sandra strongly identified with the South. In fact, they both seemed to want to disclaim their southern heritage throughout their interviews[23]. The following is an excerpt from my interview with Darren:

[22] Note that all seven of these respondents were born in the South, with the exception of Yolanda White.
[23] Throughout the interviews I tried to find out why Sandra and Darren did not want or like being southern, but I never got a clear response. Sandra talked about her preference for the climate in California. Darren seemed to like the diversity and more liberal attitudes of people in San Francisco, where they had lived.

Q: Do you consider yourself to be a southerner?

A: (pause) Yes.

Q: What makes you a southerner? Why do you answer that way?

A: Hum, well let me rephrase that. Let's do part southerner and part Californian. But uh, I lived in the South for, let me see, let's say about 15 years of my life. So you, that's why you'd call me part southerner.

Q: O.K., and how many years did you live in California?

A: The rest of my, the rest of my life, let me see, about 24 years.

Q: Which did you prefer?

A: California. San Francisco.

Both Sandra and Darren serve as an example of this tendency for those who do not have deep roots in the South or who are unclear about their family history to have a weaker identification with the South. In contrast, those with more familiarity with their southern ancestry strongly identify with the South. Many respondents, particularly whites, could trace their roots back to their first ancestors in America. Virtually all of the respondents who could trace their heritage back to these original immigrants believed that these ancestors arrived at southern ports and settled in southern states. William Lancaster (Marion, 46, white), who is a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans and identifies strongly with the South, talks about his ancestry:

They lived in the South, families have lived in the South since they came over. My mom's side came over from Scotland in 1755. My dad's came over, the Lancasters came over from Ireland in 1790.

Q: When they came over do you know where they, did they come straight to the South?

A: Yes, they all came in through Wilmington. Uh, came into, Lancasters came into Johnston County and then they had some, in 1820 they had some trouble with the law (laughing) so they moved to the mountains.

Darren also seemed quite bitter about his experiences with racism in the South, so perhaps this also made California more attractive and shaped his partial rejection of a southern identity.

> Q: What about your mom's side, when did they come to this area?
>
> A: They came, actually they came down from Virginia. Uh, I'm assuming that, you know most of the people from Scotland came down through Pennsylvania and down the Appalachian mountains, uh, but my records and everything I've found, they probably came in through Northfork, that area right in there, instead of on up, like Massachusetts or New York. I think they came in to Virginia right there.

Charles Davis of Baton Rouge (83, white), who asserted that he was a southerner and proud of it at the beginning of our interview, speaks of his heritage in the South:

> The Revolutionary War, my ancestors, came over here from England in 1600 something, and landed in Maryland. And they lived in the eastern part of Maryland for a long time. And uh, what's his name? Josiah. Josiah was in the Revolutionary War. And he was captured, and he fought in the battle of Cowpens and Monmouth, and in all those kind of good things. And then our ancestors went to Georgia, and then from Georgia to Louisiana.

Perhaps for my white respondents, being able to trace their roots back to the original settlers in the South who came over from Europe made them feel more authentically southern, gave them more of a claim to their regional identity and a stronger sense of southernness. Many white respondents also appeared to enjoy pointing out that their ancestors fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. They seemed to covet this part of their family history as a badge of honor. Brent Jacobs (Nashville, 57, white) talks about family stories that he heard growing up.

> There would be all these stories, you know, what the family had done in previous generations and so forth, you know, how they fought for the South. My family had six brothers who went off to the Civil War, and only two of them made it back. And the two that made it back had bounties on them. I mean they had to go to Texas for a while, you know, until Reconstruction was over, and then they returned. So, it was a different time. My family essentially fought like hell for the South, died for the South. We was destroyed by our efforts, so. I really don't, I don't see how anybody can really write about this sort of stuff unless they have lost, you know, a lot. I mean essentially it would be like me walking in the door, and taking 90% of your wealth and killing your husband, and you would be a southerner (laughing). That's what happened to us. I mean you have to have somebody who has lost a nation, you know, to really, to describe this, you know. I really think that sometimes in the back of a lot of people's minds they still feel like they're in an occupied country, you know, where certain names are still being forced on them, here in the South.

Brent Jacobs speaks with pride of the sacrifices that his family made for the South and talks as if the wounds of the Civil War are still somehow fresh, over 100 years later. Several other white respondents (seven in all, who were all male) had this same attitude, talking about the Civil War as an event that still needed defending. These respondents, four of whom were members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, all strongly asserted their southern identity. In Brent Jacobs view, having ancestors who fought for the South, having a family that experienced loss, made him a true southerner. For some it seems that having family roots in the South that extend back to the time of the Civil War, particularly having family members who were in the Confederate Army, provides a sense of authenticity when making southern identity claims. The words of Brent Daniels (Nashville, 62, white) very clearly demonstrate the tendency of some white southerners to link having Confederate ancestors to assertions of southern identity:

> I've been looking into all this, genealogy, in recent months. I don't have it with me, but I even have all of that written down and was doing some tracking. I even had people going out to graveyards and locating relatives, which they've found, all of them but maybe one I think. I forget which one it was. But I had an uncle that fought in the Civil War, John Riley, that fought in the Civil War, and he was a supplier out of Cannon County. He supplied the Confederacy during the War and all. So I am a southerner.

Ted Jefferson (Nashville, 53, white), who also has Confederate ancestors, is even more explicit on this point when I queried him about who can claim to be a southerner:

> Q: Are there any racial groups that you think can't be southerners?
>
> A: No, I think anybody can be, can assimilate to be a southerner, but they're not going to have the connotation of going back to the true South, which is going back to the Civil War times, is my idea of a true southerner. They won't have roots that go back to those people.
>
> Q: Do you think, do you tend to associate southerners with white southerners or with white and black southerners going back to the Civil War?
>
> A: They're both, they're both. They're both. And there may be some other people, other uh, other people other than black and white who were here then that I don't know about. And if they were here, and they've got ancestors, they've got descendents, then

> they're part southerners. You know Indians, Chinese, I don't know. I mean I'm sure there were all kinds of people here, but I don't, I'm not really familiar with who they were.
>
> Q: Do you think people who move here, either from the North or from other countries, that they can eventually become southerners, or do you think that they need to have that history?
>
> A: No, I think you have, you have to go back. You can be southern in geographic only, but not in family ancestry. Let's put it that way. But when I think of the southerners, I think of descendents of the Civil War people.

Ted Jefferson believes that both black and white southerners, and any other races for that matter, who can trace their family history back to the Civil War are "true southerners."

Whereas white southerners often use Confederate relatives to demonstrate their authenticity as southerners, black respondents often used the time of slavery as something of a marker when making southern identity claims.

Larry Carpenter (Nashville, 55, black):

> Q: Do you know how long your family has been in the South?
>
> A: Oh for, since the time of slavery, because my father's father died in 1955, and I think he was about 90. And he had grown up in Camden, Alabama until (pause), and then I know his parents, so it, they've always lived in the South. My roots are deep in the South.

Amelia Trudell (Marion, 49, black):

> Q: How far back has your family been in the South?
>
> A: I guess probably forever, I mean probably since they, cause I know my mother's father was a product of the slave master. So imagine they were, I don't know for sure about original, they were slaves. And the master owned land in the country here, in the South.

When talking about their ancestry, whites respondents often spoke of their ancestry as going back to European origins, England or France or Ireland, for example. In contrast, black respondents seldom mentioned their roots before the times of slavery. This may be because black respondents have more difficulty tracing their family history due to the slave trade, as slaves were moved from one owner to the next, separating families. A few

black respondents noted that it was difficult to trace their heritage back. Harry Stanford (Marion, 57, black) discusses how his family history is rooted in America:

> I see myself as a human being first, and secondly as black. And I say black. You're probably curious about me using the term black rather than African American. I don't like the term African American.
>
> Q: What don't you like about the term?
>
> A: I don't know it… I guess one of the things, I get tired of every couple of generations the term being changed, you know. I understand it's from negro to black because of the dialects involved in saying the word negro, you know, folks like to mispronounce it, say negra, that kind of thing. And I understood the term moved to the term black. And as far as I'm concerned black is entirely appropriate. African American tires me to… you know, and I guess I do have, I know I do have ties to Africa, but it's so far removed that uh, and to a point I guess I would like to know a little bit about my heritage. I trace my heritage back to great-grandparents. You know that history was right here in America.

I bring up this point because perhaps the difficulty that blacks have tracing their roots back to Africa may make their identity as southerners a bit more important to them, maybe lending a bit of insight into why blacks claim this identity slightly more frequently than whites in the region. Though in the above passage Harry is speaking in terms of America, he does trace both sides of his family back to the South and claims a southern identity. So his family's experience in America has always been in the South.

On the whole, as in the case of an ethnic identity, ancestry does seem to play a role in the identity claims of many respondents. Having deep family roots in the South seems to bolster people's connection to the region (see also Reed 1983). In some ways this gives an ascriptive quality to the identity – if your ancestors are from the South, you are southern. But respondents tend to discuss southernness as a culture as well, and see southerners as having certain traits, cultural practices, and ways of speaking. So being southern is not an innate trait, an in-born quality, but involves learning a culture. How do respondents learn about this culture?

Socialization and the Role of Parents

Parents play a key role in socializing children. Wanting to explore whether parents teach their children about both southern culture and their sense of southernness, I asked respondents if they thought their parents identified as southerners, whether being southern was very important to their parents, and if their parents talked much about being southern when the respondents were growing up. I also asked them if they thought much about being southern when they were children and when they first begin to realize or become more consciously aware of their southernness.

Of 64 respondents who answered the question about their parents' regional identity, fifty-six thought both of their parents would claim a southern identity. The vast majority of these respondents cited their parents' birth and rearing in the South as the reason why they would claim a southern identity. Also of note, all but one of these respondents claimed a southern identity themselves.[24]

Eight respondents had one or more parents whom they did not believe would consider themselves to be southern. Three of these respondents were born outside of the South and had parents who were both born outside of the region. None claimed a southern identity. Interestingly ,two black respondents who were born in the South and whose parents were born in the South did not claim to be southern and did not believe that their parents would claim a southern identity. One of these respondents was not really sure what makes a person southern; the other respondent and his family did not

[24] This one exception was a white man in Nashville who believed that his parents claimed a southern identity, but he did not primarily for political reasons (his beliefs and values did not "fit" with what he perceived as southern values – conservatism, racism, and anti-intellectualism).

claim the identity "due to the history" of the South[25]. The other three respondents had at least one parent from the South. One of these respondents was born in the South and considered herself a southerner. The other two were born outside of the South, but had lived in the region for many years, and both were a little unsure about their southern identity. Overall, it seems that perceiving your parents as being southern does increase the likelihood that the children will also claim the identity.

Respondents were also asked if they thought being southern was very important to their parents. Of the 47 respondents who answered this question, roughly half believed being southern was important to their parents; the other half either thought the identity was of little importance to their parents or responded that they did not know[26]. In terms of looking at the generational transmission of southern identity, one would expect that if parents did influence their children's feelings about southern identity, then parents who felt the identity was very important to them would also have children who valued the identity (and vice versa, parents who did not see the identity as important would have children who did not really value the identity). Unfortunately, with these data it is not possible to truly link the importance parents place on the identity to the importance that their children place on the identity because I could not ask the parents this question directly. I had to rely on the perceptions of the respondents about their parents' feelings.

Keeping this in mind, it is still interesting to note that on the whole there was congruence between respondents' perceptions of the importance of the identity for their

[25] I believe he was referring to racism, but this was a bit unclear in the interview.
[26] The smaller number of respondents (47 as compared to the sample size of 65) that responded to this question is due to several factors: 1) only respondents who thought their parents were southern were asked this question, and 2) in some cases respondents either did not have time to answer all of the interview questions or were rather long-winded, in which case we could not complete the entire interview. This last factor played a role in other cases of lower sample size numbers cited for questions throughout this dissertation.

parents and their own feelings about their southern identity. Further, it is possible that a respondent's perception of his or her parents' identity may be a more salient factor in the individual's identity claims than the actual claims of parents. Thirty-three respondents out of 40 (82.5%) mirrored what they perceived to be the feelings of their parents about southern identity. This provides some indication that how respondents perceive their parents feel about being southern influences how they value the identity.

Very few respondents said that their parents or other family members talked about being southern when they were growing up. Only six had family who talked about being southern. Three out of the six respondents were African American. All of these respondents remembered their parents or grandparents speaking of the South in terms of the difficulty blacks had in the region. Shonda Murphy (Baton Rouge, 57, black) speaks of her parents:

> Q: Did your parents talk about being southerners very often?
>
> A: Yeah, my dad had issues with the problem that it was not equal in the South. He had problems with that. And he thought because we had a lot of black flight, you know, back when I was a kid everybody that got to be a certain age, they wanted to go North because they thought the life was better. And he would talk about that with us. My dad was the kind of man that would sit around and have all of us sit on the floor, and he would give us these big, big pow-wow talks. And his mom was half-Indian,… and she had experienced a lot of racism, and so I think that was the only thing I ever heard him say about the South that was negative. My mom never really talked much about it, because she was, my mom was a product of an inter-racial relationship, as you probably know and can tell [based on the respondent's light skin]. And so was her mom. So her mom was white, and her mom's dad was white. So it was one of those, so she never really talked about that that much. The only time the South came up, and the negative part about the South, was during the Civil Rights thing. We talked a lot about it, and I'm sure it was something that was there on their mind.

For Shonda's family, it seems that discussion of the South only came up in terms of race relations in the region. Similarly, Joseph Freedom, an 88 year old African American man in Marion, recalls his parents and grandparents talking about the South:

> Q: When you were growing up did your parents or grandparents talk about being southerners in any way?
>
> A: Lord yeah.
>
> Q: What types of things did they talk about?
>
> A: Well they'd talk about how rough it was. What you had to do. They talked about the Klu Klux Klan more than anything else.
>
> Q: Was the Klan very prevalent around this area?
>
> A: Well… mum, not too bad, but in Rutherford County [N.C.] it was, where my parents grew up, like everywhere. It was rough. If you'd have said the wrong thing, if they didn't like it, some white person, see, they'd come give you a good wupping, kill you, or stick you to a tree and burn you or whatever. There some of them now that tries to run that old Klu Klux thing. If you don't believe me, anytime you see that old rebel flag you better watch it…See a black person won't go nowhere where he sees that flag. It's hate. That's right.

Again it is quite clear that for Joseph Freedom's family, discussion of the South revolved around race and racial oppression in the South.

In contrast, the few whites who remembered their parents or other family talking of the South had quite a different experience. They focused more on their family's heritage in the region or connection to the history of the South. Michael Roberts (55, white) of Nashville:

> Q: When you were growing up did your parents or grandparents talk about being southerners very often?
>
> A: Oh yes. I had one grandmother who, she was a little more than the rest of them, I mean she was I think probably a member of the D.A.R. [Daughters of the American Revolution], or the, I don't know about the Confederate Daughters or whatever, but she probably would embrace… you know you're much more likely to see her than any other member of my family with a picture of Robert E. Lee or Jefferson Davis or something.

On the occasions when Brent Jacobs' (Nashville, 57, white) family talked about the South, they spoke of the Civil War and some of their family members' participation in the early Klan.

> Q: Did your parents talk a lot about being southerners? Did they tell these stories frequently that you're describing?

A: No, I mean you know from time to time something would come out, just about stuff based around the Civil War, or stuff that happened after the Civil War. The Klan and stuff like that has in many cases a whole different meaning to somebody out of the South. After the Civil War this was really a lawless country. You had desperate men, Yankee marauders, blacks who had freedom and were a bit outrageous, you know. And the way that the people banded together… now, I mean it's one of the things where initially you could give a definite defense of somebody that was in the Klan, and then after a while there were certain people that used the front of the Klan to do personal revenges and stuff like that, and that's why it became something rather different, where now it's something that's totally obscene. Amazingly enough, the stories I heard about the Klan and its enforcements rarely involved blacks. They were situations where some man would molest women, the Klan would show up at night, take him out of his bed and tie him to a tree and whip him. And nothing to do with race.

Q: You mean doing this to whites who were doing these things?

A: Yeah, yeah. I mean the stories I heard about the Klan rarely involved blacks. I mean it's amazing, you know. And now it's just, it is a thing of bigotry and so forth.

Q: Do you know if any of your family members, back in that time, were members of the Klan?

A: Yeah, they were members of the Klan. And from some of the stuff that I've heard, it seems they were well justified, you know, and in those days, even if you were brought to trial most of the people that were sitting in the jury box, the judge included, would be members of the Klan, you know. It was just, you know, essentially the flower of the South was gone, you know. What was left, the remnants, banded together and did whatever was necessary to hold a reasonable lifestyle together, so.

Brent Jacobs certainly seems to minimize the role of the Klan in racial terror, a subject that I will take up later. But for now this passage serves as an example of how the white respondents who had family who talked about the South generally spoke in terms of the passing down of family stories or the ties of their family to the South's history.

A handful of respondents said that their family did not talk specifically about being southern, or in those terms, but they would talk about their family history, which was rooted in the South. Betty Hilgurt (43), a white respondent from Nashville:

Q: Did your parents talk much about being southerners?

A: That's a good question. Did they talk much about it? No, no. My dad was a real genealogical, a real genealogy buff, and he was a real history buff, so I knew a lot about

where we grew up and all, but I don't remember it being touted as being southern so to speak. Does that make sense? I mean just, it was just kind of where we were.

Q: Right. More of your family history…

A: Yeah.

Q: But not really in terms of the South or…

A: Right, right. I mean there are stories of Sherman marching through and all of that, you know, that whole Civil War thing and the horses being hidden out on the property and, I mean there was a lot of talk about that kind of thing, but I don't really remember it being um, talked about so much as being southern, just the actual term southern. I don't know why. I don't know if I'm answering that very clearly.

Betty's family history is anchored in the South, but this did not mean that family discussions consciously evoked the region. Similarly, Larry Carpenter (55), a black respondent from Nashville, speaks of his family:

Q: When you were growing up did your parents talk much about being southerners in any way?

A: No. That's something they never talked about. They talked about family history at times. We had family reunions. We knew from what was said then that we had deep roots in the South, family roots, church roots, but you know nothing much about being southern or a southerner. Just a part of our identity that was taken for granted, so you know people just didn't talk about it.

Here, he touches on another theme that came up fairly often when I queried respondents about their family discussions of the South. Discussions of the South did not occur because it was something that was "accepted" or "taken for granted" and therefore did not need explicit discussion. Charles Davis (83, white) from Baton Rouge:

Q: When you were growing up, did you parents talk much about being southerners?

A: I don't specifically remember any conversation along those lines. I guess it's just something that you just take for granted. You live there all your life, and so you just take it for granted.

In the following exchange, Patty Simpson (24, white), also of Baton Rouge, seems to echo Charles Davis's remarks:

Q: When you were growing up did you think of yourself as a southerner?

A: Yes, instilled in me from my mother (laughing).

Q: Oh really, did she talk much about it, or in what ways did she…?

A: It's just something that we're just proud of. I don't know how to, I don't know if, it was not something we actually discussed per se, it's just, it's just known. It's just there. We're from the South, you know. She, you know, prides herself in being Cajun, South Louisiana, and all that stuff, which I do too. So it's just a known fact. We didn't have to discuss it I guess.

And Mark Hobbes (38, white) of Marion:

Q: Now when you were growing up, did your mom talk about being a southerner? Was this ever a topic of conversation?

A: Not really. She obviously was from the South, and, and she taught me a lot about, without intending to, she taught me a lot about being a southerner, you know like going to church, well what you're supposed to do when you go to church. And you know I grew up on fried chicken and biscuits and livermush and stuff like that. And expressions and things like, and manners, and all of these things that people associate with the South. She didn't talk about it, but she acted it out. She lived it.

Both Mark and Patty responded that their parents never really talked about the South. Nonetheless, they also both feel that their parents taught them a lot about being southern. As Mark points out at the end of the passage above, his mother "acted it out. She lived it." It does seem that most parents did not directly or explicitly talk about the South with their children, nor does it seem that they consciously tried to instill their children with a sense of southern pride or identity. Even so, respondents may have still learned about the South by exposure to their own family customs, such as food practices, and exposure to the larger southern culture through simply living in the region.

Children and Southern Identity

This point is further demonstrated by looking at respondents' feelings about their children. I asked them if they wanted their children (or in some cases grandchildren) to

identify as southern. Those who did not have children were asked whether they would like their children to identify as southerners, if they have children at some future time.

By looking at respondents who claim a southern identity themselves, we can see if it is important to them that their children see themselves as southern. Thirty-five respondents answered this question[27]. Of these self-proclaimed southerners, only 14 (40%) responded that they wanted their children to identify as southern, while the majority, 21 (60%), responded that it did not really matter one way or the other. Of the 14 who wanted their children to claim a southern identity, twelve of these were white, and only two were black. Of the 21 who did not care one way or the other, seventeen were black (81%), and only 4 (19%) were white. It is clear, from these data, at any rate, that white respondents were much more interested in their children claiming a southern identity than the black respondents, though only a minority of whites overall were concerned that their children claim a southern identity.

Overall these data provide a somewhat complicated view of the generational transmission of southern identity. Respondents who are able to trace several generations of their family back to the South are more likely to claim to being southern. Further, those who believe their parents claim to be southern are more likely to claim the identity. Also, when respondents perceive that being southern was important to their parents, they are more likely to also express that the identity is important to them. However, it does not seem that parents deliberately try to pass along a southern identity to their children, at least not through conversations with their children. Very few respondents recalled their parents talking about being southern. It may be that children learn about southernness from watching their parents, and through exposure to the larger culture in this region.

Finally, the majority of respondents did not seem very concerned that their children also claim a southern identity, with blacks far less likely to be concerned than whites.

Migrants

One final area needs to be explored when thinking of southern identity as an ethnic identity. If an ethnic identity is in part based on birth or ancestry in a geographic place that has a unique culture, what do southerners think about those who migrate into the South from other regions of the United States? Can they ever become southern?

Though most southerners cite such things as birth, being raised in the South, or having ancestors from the South as evidence that they are southern, nonetheless 33 out of the 58 respondents (56.9%) who answered the question on regional migrants asserted that people could move to the South and become southern. In contrast, twenty-five respondents (43.1%) claimed that in order to be southern one must have some combination of birth, rearing, or ancestry in the South. So for a great many southerners, in these data, southern identity has a certain flexibility. It is a status that in some sense can be achieved by "outsiders." Respondents gave a variety of means by which one can adopt a southern identity, including living in the region for a long time (or for some, simply living in the region), adopting aspects of southern culture such as culinary practices and manners of speech, or simply appreciating the region and wanting to be a southerner. The following are some examples of this type of sentiment:

Greg Coppage (Baton Rouge, 51, white):

> Q: Do you think people can move here and become southern if they stay here for a while?

[27] Respondents with grown children were not included.

A: Sure, if they want to. I don't see why not.

Q: So overall what do you think makes someone a southerner?

A: I guess just living in the area, you know investing your life in the area, and… I don't know. I guess that's the biggest thing to me, would be being part of the community and that kind of thing. And just because you're not born in this area doesn't mean that you can't come down here and be part of the area. You know, my boss is from New York, but he went to Mississippi State, so you see he's (laughing), he's a southerner anyway to me.

Mark Hobbes (Marion, 38, white):

Q: Are there any groups that you think can't be southerners? Like for instance if someone moves here from the North and comes to the South, do you think they can become a southerner?

A: Oh yes, they can. Yes. I've known, I was telling you about that guy who was a principal here from Buffalo, New York. He had, he had a daughter, and not long after she started living here, she picked up a southern accent. I swear to God she did (laughing). That's one example, yeah.

And George Nickleson (Marion, 22, black):

Q: Do you think people who are from other regions and have moved down here and say stayed for 10 years or something, do you think they can call themselves southerners?

A: Yeah because after like an extended period of time like that, you tend to take on a lot of the traits and stuff of where you're at, your areas and stuff like that, so. I think if you stay long enough you start to change a little bit. Everything's not going to change, but I think enough changes where you know you're from the South now.

It seems that southerners are divided on this point. Many of my respondents believe that being southern is a culture that can be adopted by those who migrate to the region from other parts of the United States. Others assert that to be southern you must be born in the region or have been raised in the South. For example, Julien Scott (58, black) of Baton Rouge:

Q: Overall what is it that you think makes somebody a southerner?

A: Well I think first of all you have to be born in the South. I don't think you can, I don't think you can get this by moving down here (laughing). And uh, but first of all you have to be born in the South, and you have to live here. You have to know, understand the culture and the people.

Jennifer Dartmouth (Nashville, 54, white)):

> Q: Are there any groups of people that you think can't be southerners?
>
> A: Hum (pause). Um let's see, I think that…groups of people that can't be southerners? I just, I mean if you were born and raised here you're a southerner. If you weren't, you're not, you'll never be.
>
> Q: O.K., so people who migrate here from the North, you think they can't ever be southerners?
>
> A: Nope. Not unless they came, unless they came early on (laughing). Nope, it's not gonna happen. Not going to happen. There's a commissioner with me, and he was talking last night, he's from Ohio. And I thought, you know, he just has a different, slightly different slant cause he is from Ohio. That's where his roots are, that's where his, that's where his center was evolved. So I don't, no, I don't think he can. I just don't. I don't think you can transplant, or it'd be rare. It would be unusual. You would be, it would be the exception.

And Gerald Tyson (Nashville, 65, black):

> Q: Are there any people or groups that you think cannot be southerners?
>
> A: Yes, I think anyone who was not born there and who was not, and who did not mature in the culture cannot be southern. I don't think those people can be southern. Uh I think they can uh adapt to the culture, but I don't think they'll ever be a southerner any more than I could ever be a northerner.

Note that these respondents who emphasize birth or rearing in the South still seem to put a cultural spin on southern identity. They just believe that this culture cannot be acquired once one has matured in another region.

Summary

So what does all this tell us about the South as an ethnic identity? At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed ethnicity as having both cultural and geographic components. Ethnic groups see their culture as unique and different. According to Reed's definition, this culture is based on a sense of shared ancestry and residential history. These groups are also tied to a geographic place or homeland. Most of my

respondents do seem to identify as southern based on their birth or rearing in the region. Most also have deep roots in the South, going back several generations. So in this sense the identity may resemble an ethnic identity. If this is true, southern identity may be unusual in that it crosses races. Both blacks and whites claim the identity (though it may not hold equal importance for each racial group). It is also clear that my respondents see the South as having a unique culture, one that is expressed through such things as food, speech patterns and accents, and the celebration of some holidays.

The generational transmission of this identity poses some difficulties in terms of the ethnic analogy. If an ethnic identity is based in part on heredity, it is unusual that many of my respondents did not remember their parents talking much about the South, in an attempt to "pass along" the identity. Also, large numbers of respondents, especially African Americans, did not show much interest in passing the identity along to their children. It seems that an ethnic identity would have more meaning for those who claimed it. Would not ethnic group members show more concern about preserving their heritage by passing it to the next generation?

Further, it is not clear that this identity remains salient once people leave the South. Unfortunately I do not have the data to fully explore this possibility. However, several respondents commented that if they left the South, they would still be southern. Nick Godfrey (Marion, 53, black) talks about how he would carry his culture with him:

> Q: If someone moves here from the North, do you think they can ever call themselves a southerner?
>
> A: No. Huh-uh, no. You can take, what is that, you can take the man out of the mountains but you can't take the mountains out of the man, or something like that. No, you know, even just think if I moved to Maryland, Baltimore or whatever, wherever up there, I'm going to always, my own personal feelings, I'm going to always be a southerner. I'm going to always be from the South. I'm going to always be from the South.

William Lancaster (46, white) of Marion makes a similar point:

> Q: So overall what do you think makes somebody a southerner?
>
> A: But, it would be just like if uh I moved up North. I wouldn't consider myself a northerner. And I wouldn't expect nobody to consider me as a northerner, because…I'm sure I would not fit in well up there. Well I probably would, in the long term, but just the way I would think about things and the way they think about things, I just couldn't consider myself as a northerner. You know I would be a southerner that's up there.

So those born and raised in the South might hold on to the southern culture if they moved to another region, but what about their children? If their children were born and raised in the North, would they consider themselves to be southerners? Three of my respondents had such children, and according to their parents, none of these children identified as southern. I asked Gerald Tyson (Nashville, 65, black) about his children:

> Q: Do you want your children to identify as southerners?
>
> A: Uh, I would be happy if they would, but they probably won't because you know they, they really um, they were not born in the South, and they haven't really lived much of the time in the South. My son is now back in Virginia, but uh, I think he's been there six or seven years, but he was born in the North. And so was my daughter. Well my daughter was born in Oklahoma, but she grew up in the North. So they came of age really in the North, not the South.

Lawrence Jennings (Nashville, 59, black) is even more certain that his children do not identify with the South:

> Q: Is it important to you that they [his children] identify themselves as southerners?
>
> A: Oh that ain't about to happen. That's not about to happen. We have three sons, one was born in Nashville, two were born in Pennsylvania. And particularly the ones from Pennsylvania are not about to identify as southerners, at all.
>
> Q: Are they opposed to the…?
>
> A: Oh, heck yeah. Well it's kind of interesting. One of them spent about a year down here, you know he just thought the South was terrible. The East Coast was so much better. Then he moved back up to the East Coast, and in a few weeks he was saying, "God, the people in the South are so much more courteous, I can't, my God, these people, ugh." The South has it all over, I'll be damned. No, he's not about to identify as a southerner. I mean they have a, they grew up in, you know, a wealthy suburb of Philadelphia where most of their friends were not even African Americans. You know,

> the South is sort of this place where mom and dad are from, but they're not about to identify. And the son who was born in Nashville, we moved away when he was six. So he grew up in Baltimore and then in Pennsylvania, and went to, you know East Coast private university. All of his education has been on the East Coast. He's not going to live in the South.

I probed further as to why he thought his children would not identify with the South:

> Q: Do you think they view those regions as more cultured in a sense, or kind of cosmopolitan?
>
> A: Oh yeah, oh yeah. They visit. My family and stuff in the South is mostly people out in the rural areas still. Speech patterns and dress, you know, body language and social activities, it was a very, very different … They are not people who travel all over the country or outside of the country or anything like that. They are not folk whose houses are filled with books and magazines and stuff like that… you know none of those kids, none of them went to college. You know, high school was it. So they had a very, you know it's a very different regional, class…you know I said, my kids grew up in middle, upper-middle, lower-upper income cultural brackets. So no, they don't identify with the South. That's not about to happen (laughing).

Though we cannot draw firm conclusions from these few instances, they do suggest that once southerners leave the region, southern identity does not continue through subsequent generations. So again, would this identity qualify as an ethnicity?

Perhaps here is where a distinction can be made between what is termed a "place identity" and an "ethnic identity." Whereas an ethnic identity might continue on, even when peoples are located in other lands (such as Italians or Irish people in America), it is doubtful that southerners would persist in such a manner once folks leave the region. Once the place is gone, people in subsequent generations no longer identify with the culture. The ethnic analogy is further complicated by the notion many respondents have that people can migrate from other regions and "become southern" in one generation. Would this occur in other ethnic groups in America? Could one become Latino, or become Irish? This too seems doubtful. So though southern identity may resemble an ethnic identity in many instances, it seems that there are limits as to how well this analogy "fits" the southern experience.

CHAPTER IV

SOUTHERN IDENTITY AS A STIGMATIZED IDENTITY

As I discussed in the first chapter, southern identity, particularly when associated with southern whites, has often been portrayed as a stigmatized identity. Southerners have been perceived as less intelligent, backwards, poor, violent, racist, and intolerant (see for example Cash 1941; Tindall 1976; Griffin 1995) – and these are just a few of the many negative images often associated with the region and its people. Historians and other cultural analysts have studied the region's history and cultural productions as a means to examine these negative attributions. However, little if any research, with the exception of the survey research conducted by Reed (1983), has examined how southerners see their own identity, particularly in terms of this issue of stigma. Based on his 1971 survey of whites in North Carolina, Reed (1983) found that having a sense of regional grievance[28] was associated with stronger regional identification and consciousness. However these data were limited because they did not include open-ended questions concerning stigma, pertained only to North Carolinians, and did not include black southern respondents. One of the goals of this project is to talk to southerners, both black and white, about their perceptions of the South and its people. Most scholars of the region seem to be in agreement that indeed the southern identity is seen as a stigmatized identity, particularly by non-southerners. But do southerners really see themselves in this negative light?

[28] Regional grievance refers to a person's sense that the South is not doing as well as the rest of the country or is treated unfairly in the areas of economics, politics, and culture.

Southerners' Views of Their Own Group

Not that Different from Other Folks

During the interviews, I asked respondents what traits they associated with southerners. Fifty-five respondents who claimed a southern identity answered this question. Of these, six respondents, five of whom were African American, could not identify any traits as uniquely southern. So this gives some indication that at least a portion of black southerners that I interviewed do not really see southern people as different from people in other regions[29]. They may identify as southern by birth in the geographic region, but do not really associate any particular attributes with the identity.

Also of interest, though certainly we have too few respondents to draw firm conclusions from this finding, is that four of the six respondents who did not associate any traits with southerners were from Marion, North Carolina. I found that many respondents in Marion seemed rather "provincial" in their thinking, in that they had not traveled a great deal nor did they have many interactions with non-southerners. By having deep roots in the foothills and little experience outside of the region, they probably did not have many encounters with people of different regions to contrast with people in their own area. Many of these folks had thick southern accents, grew up in rural areas, were very serious about their religion, and enjoyed southern food, attributes often ascribed to southerners, yet they did not seem to think of themselves as "southern" very often. This phenomenon seems to confirm Reed's notion that some southerners can be considered "locals" because they adhere to local values, themselves often associated

[29] These findings are consistent with the work of Griffin (2006), who found that white southerners were more likely than black southerners to see the South as distinctive.

with the South, but do not see these values or attributes as "southern" in a larger regional sense (Reed, 1983). My dialogue with Jeff Thompson, a 46 year old black man from Marion, offers a good example. Here I asked him about southern customs:

> Q: Are there southern customs or practices that are part of your life, like the food you eat or music or the way you celebrate your religion? Anything like that that you think of as southern?
>
> A: Well I don't know. You get some of the outsiders that may come in here and you know one thing, people like this pinto beans and cornbread and hamhocks middling with what a lot of people call fatback. Country ham. I don't know if that's what you call southern. I know it's good eatin' though (laughing). You know fried chicken, different types of greens, chittlins, all sorts of stuff like that. I don't know if you have to be a southerner to like that or not, but crackling cornbread, I know a lot of people around that's have, you know, that growed up eating that kind of food. Cabbage, um, potatoes and onions and stuff like that. I think that's just a good way of eating. You like that kind of carrying on?

Jeff Thompson quickly named a series of foods that are associated with the South, but he did not really recognize these things as southern[30]. This was just the food he grew up on. I also asked him if he thinks about being southern very often and what traits he associates with southerners:

> Q: Are there any times when you tend to think of yourself as a southerner?
>
> A: No. I don't, I don't guess.
>
> Q: Are there any characteristics that you associate with southern people?
>
> A: For example?
>
> Q: Some people think that southerners are more friendly or things like that… or do you think that they're similar to people in other areas of the country?
>
> A: You know I'd say would be similar to others. You get some of your out-of-towners, they come in here and they'll think, "you old country boy, you old country hick," and just think you're, you know dumb as hell. And they think they can come in here and you know hire you to work for nothing, and you know, they just really think that's the greatest thing, but you know it's not really like that. They's some people thinks that way, you know.
>
> Q: Do you associate any particular characteristics with northerners?

[30] For more on the connection between foodways and southern identity, see Latshaw (forthcoming).

A: No, I try to treat people as people. I try to be fair with everyone.

Though Jeff is aware that some "out-of-towners" look down on people in Marion, he does not seem to really associate any traits with southerners or northerners. Again, he seems oriented to his own local area, where "out-of-towners" might occasionally come in, but he does not seem to think in regional terms. Yet most would probably conclude that he is quite southern.

Based on these data, we cannot truly conclude whether those who do not associate unique traits with southerners are less in touch with their southern identity because of their race or due to a more provincial outlook (or some combination of the two). Five of the six respondents who did not cite unique traits were African American, but this could be a simple consequence of sampling. Four of the six were from Marion, which may suggest that provincialism affects perceptions of regional distinctiveness. Perhaps the effects of provincialism are more pronounced for African Americans. Unfortunately, due to the small number of respondents who did not associate any specific traits with southerners, we cannot pursue these hypotheses with these data. However, fruitful areas of future exploration may be to see how race interacts with place identity, and how the scope of place identity may vary depending on place of residence[31]. In other words, individuals in more isolated communities may think of place in terms of more localized areas rather than whole regions. This raises the question: where do people draw the boundaries of place in terms of a meaningful identity?

[31] For an overview of the sociological literature on "place identity," see Gieryn (2000).

Positive Traits of Southerners

Those who identify as southern but do not associate particular traits with southerners comprise a small, though interesting, minority of my sample. However, most self-professed southern respondents did believe southern people have unique traits. And surprisingly, with the exception of only two respondents out of the 49 who described southern traits, all of these began by listing what would generally be termed positive traits about the South. The following are a few examples:

Doug Chambers (Baton Rouge, 25, black):

> The traits southerners have? I would say hospitable. Just for the most part really nice people. Really hospitable people.

Isabel Conners (Baton Rouge, 40, black):

> I think they're, for the most part, very kind-hearted. I would say generous. If they can help you they will. If they know you need it they will try to pitch in and help you.

Anna Brown (Marion, 72, white):

> I think they're friendly, very friendly. And they never see a stranger. Your older ones, you just watch them, they'll come right up and start talking, and just be very, mostly, maybe some men more than women, because I don't go up and talk to strangers, but so many of them just, you know, will come right up and start talking, as a friendly gesture, just to be friendly. I've gone on trips with several, and they're just as friendly on trips as they are right here in the state. So I think that's typical of the southern person.

William Lancaster (Marion, 46, white):

> Well I said they was honest, most of thems got to work for, you know, work for a living. God-fearing, uh, cause I still know a lot of old men that get down on their knees and pray every night, you know. Uh, and that's the way they were brought up. You know when, a lot of the southerners when they were kids, they were out in the fields working, you know. They gonna appreciate what they get, because they've had to work for it, scratch out a living for four or five generations.

Larry Carpenter (Nashville, 55, black):

> Oh I would say southerners… like I say I think religion would be one. I think that has been true of black and white communities. At least we claim to be, and we practice religion. People go to church and take spiritual values very seriously. So I would think that is one. I think, um, and I mentioned family several times, extended family traditions. Not just family traditions, but extended family, because I remember we used to call

> people who weren't even related to us "aunt" and "uncle," uh if they were elderly people. And I would also say respect for elders, even though that's dying, a dying tradition. Because when I grew up you could get a whipping for disrespecting elderly people. And any elderly person could chastise you, could whip you if you acted up as a child.

And, finally, Betty Hilgurt (Nashville, 43, white):

> …Friendly. I would definitely think it's, it's kind of a generic trait. Um, I think pride, I think they're kind of a proud people, in general. I think that they're, I think southerners in general are very I think in general hard-working. I think in general they, southerners, and I guess it comes from a history of having to kind of eek out a living from the soil kind of thing, but I just think of them as kind of earthy, kind of hard-working people.

These excerpts demonstrate a range of characteristics associated with southerners in different parts of the region. Respondents often mentioned such things as southern hospitality, the southern accent, religion, the closeness of families, the slower pace of life (generally spoken of as a positive trait in comparison to the rush and hurry of the North), and the caring nature of southern people. Respondents, both black and white, young and old, poor and wealthy, were much more likely to mention positive traits that they associated with the South than negative traits. Out of 49 self-claimed southerners who discussed what they perceived as unique regional traits, forty-six (93.9%) listed one or more traits that they believed were positive. Twenty-six respondents of the 49 (53%) only said positive things about the South. These findings are consistent with the work of Griffin (2006), who, with Southern Focus Poll data, found that the majority of all southerners see the region in positive ways and reject negative stereotypes of the South.

Negative Traits of Southerners

When southerners did talk about negative traits, they did this after mentioning one or more positive traits about the region (with the exception of the two respondents noted above, who began by describing negative traits). Out of the 49 self-claimed southerners

who did discuss regional traits, twenty-three (47.9%) mentioned at least one bad trait that they associated with southerners. It should be noted that because 13 of these 23 (56.5%) only mentioned a negative trait when prompted by the interviewer, such attributes did not seem to come without elicitation. Here are some excerpts containing negative characteristics associated with southerners:

Chris Barclay (Baton Rouge, 33, white):

> Q: Do you associate any bad traits with southerners?
>
> A: Bad traits with southerners… yeah I mean there's bad traits. I'm sure there's racist southerners, and uh, what other bad traits… I mean there's, there's a lot of dishonest southerners. The politicians, evangelists, a lot of people trying to take money from, you know, take advantage and take money from people.

Jennifer Dartmouth (Nashville, 54, white):

> Q: Are there any negative traits that you associate with southerners?
>
> A: Yeah, close-minded. You know being sort of insular is a, I see a beauty about it, but yet I see that there's a negative association with it. You know there's a whole big world out there and we need to always, occasionally remind ourselves that it doesn't just revolve around, you know, some little town in Alabama. But yet, that's the, so it's sort of a double-edged sword. I see that as a, I think southerners are very open to others, we're just sort of that way in general. "Hey how you doing," we don't know a stranger, you know someone knows your whole life story in the first five minutes, I mean that's just typical southerner. But maybe we're open, we're very open to a certain level, and then maybe we're not quite as open as some of the other, in other words if you just move here from Michigan, we have that intro, and we're nice, but we don't let you get any further, so (laughing) maybe, maybe that's something that's below the surface, that we're not, we'll only let you in so far, but if you're really not quote "one of us" (laughing). There is a, there is a line there.

Ted Jefferson (Nashville, 53, white) describes some negative traits:

> I mean there are so many people that are bigoted. But, you know, I think that goes across all boundaries of this country, but… and there are so many who, because their father thought it, they think it. They're not opened minded enough to realize that just because their father was a Democrat that they, the Democrats may not have the right idea all the time or they might not have the right policies for the betterment of the most people. They're going to vote for that Democrat no matter what. That's what they call a "yellow dog Democrat."

And Rebecca Laster (Nashville, 23, black):

> Southerners that don't live in cities can be kind of racist still. I don't think that it's a malicious thing, like it used to be in the past. I think it's just ignorance. They don't have much contact with blacks, and even less with Hispanics or anybody else. So it's just kind of ignorance, I think, that makes them like that. So that's kind of negative.

There were some common negative traits that respondents mentioned. The prejudice or racism of southerners came up frequently[32]. Fourteen respondents (28.6%) described southerners as racist or intolerant. Respondents also believed that southerners can be clannish, violent, less interested in education, slow to accept change, and intolerant. Counter to my expectations, I found no discernable patterns in the likelihood of mentioning negative southern traits. I had anticipated that black southerners would speak more negatively of the South due to the history of racial oppression in the region, but blacks did not seem to be any more likely to mention racism (or other negative traits) than whites. And both races had a tendency to focus on positive characteristics as opposed to negative (Griffin 2006). I also suspected that those who were born in 1960 or earlier might have more negative characterizations of southerners (particularly of white southerners), as these respondents would have been alive during the racial turmoil of segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. However again, I found no real differences between the tendency of those who were 45 or older to speak negatively of the South and those who were younger than 45.

Perceptions of Outsiders' Views of Southerners

Though my respondents who claimed a southern identity had a tendency to focus on positive traits associated with the South, they were nonetheless aware that outsiders sometimes have negative views of the region. I asked respondents how they thought outsiders viewed southern people. Fifty-four self-identified southern respondents answered this question. Of these respondents, eight (14.8%) did not name any sorts of traits or feelings that they believed outsiders associated with southerners. They responded with statements that they were not sure how non-southerners felt, they had never really thought about it, or simply said that the views of non-southerners toward southerners was changing. The remaining 46 respondents who answered this question overwhelmingly thought that non-southerners had negative views of southerners. These findings support the analysis of the Southern Focus Polls reported in Table 2a-c in Appendix A (see also chapter 1). Forty-five of my interviewees (97.8%) named one or more negative traits that they believed outsiders held, while only ten (21.7%) named one or more positive traits held by outsiders. Further, thirty-four respondents (73.9%) spoke only of negative views held by outsiders, while only one respondent spoke solely of positive views held by outsiders. The following are a few excerpts that demonstrate typical responses of southerners to the question of how they think they are viewed by people outside of the region:

[32] Generally most were referring to the racism of white southerners. As I will discuss later, associating the racism of whites with being southern implies that to be southern is to be white.

William Lancaster (Marion, 46, white):

> Probably a little slower, a little bit less intelligent… everything that's portrayed on television. You know, tobacco-chewing, cousin-marrying (laughing), that kind of thing.

Katrina Carson (Marion, 26, black):

> I would say, and this is just my opinion, I really don't know, but I would say as being not really too smart (laughing). Um, not really knowing too much. I would think they would mostly think they're, call people terms like hillbilly and stuff like that. They would think we are just, you know, kind of like how I don't really know how they are. I would say they are unfriendly, and I'm sure there's people who is very friendly there. So I would think that mostly they would think we're really not up to speed and stuff (laughing). When I've heard people talk about the South they would say stuff like, "are you from the backwoods," or, you know, stuff like that. I don't know, just crazy stuff. So, I would say they would think we're not too smart.

Brent Daniels (Nashville, 62, white):

> I don't know, they probably thought we were all brain dead. They thought we were certainly incapable, they thought, you know, that we were certainly, um, a bunch or rednecks from the South. I think that's the way they viewed us, until they got here and found out differently. They thought we were certainly not smart business-wise. I think that most of the people who come here find out quite differently.

Fred Clump (Nashville, 58, black):

> As, I think by and large through the caricatures that have been existing in the popular media, that we are barefoot, dumb, and pregnant.

Jan and Charles Davis (married couple, Baton Rouge, 81 and 83, respectively, white):

> Charles: Well I don't know, we haven't been in contact with too many of them, but my impression is that they don't like us very much.
>
> Jan: They think we're lazy. We carry a shotgun and uh, this is just reading in the paper, a shotgun on the back of our pick-up truck, and go hunting… you know, that kind of stuff. I don't know.

And Steven Campbell (Marion, 41, white):

> Ignorant. Racist. Republicans (laughing). I have nothing against Republicans. I'm dating a Republican.

Most respondents were very quick to list a number of negative traits that they believed outsiders held about southerners. Most of these characteristics centered around southerners as being less intelligent, less cultured, poor, behind the times, less urban (i.e.

– backwoods), and naïve. Interestingly, most respondents did not mention southerners being seen as racist, a stigmatizing trait often associated with the region's white southerners. Only seven respondents (15.2%) felt that non-southerners see southerners as racist, with six of these respondents being white. The fact that whites were more likely to bring this trait up may point to their association of southernness with whiteness. I asked them how they think "southerners," not "white southerners," are viewed, but by saying "racist" they are equating southernness with white southerners (at least if we assume that by racism they are referring to the long history of white oppression of blacks in the region). The fact that only one black respondent believed southerners are viewed as racist may be some indicator that black southerners have a more inclusive definition of who southerners are (in this case, including their own race among southerners).

A few other observations can be made from respondents' answers to this question. First, one may notice that even people who had little contact with non-southerners (such as Charles and Jan Davis) believe that outsiders view southerners negatively. I found this pattern in numerous responses. Similarly, respondents who did not really identify strongly with the region, such as Katrina, who was initially unsure if she was indeed a southerner, are still aware of and easily recount the negative images of southern people.

Also of note, a handful of respondents, such as Brent Daniels quoted above, asserted that they believe non-southerners have negative views of the South, but once they come here and spend some time, those views change. In other words, their views of southerners are based on a lack of knowledge and experience interacting with southerners. Here is Claire Kendall (Baton Rouge, 74, white) discussing how non-southerners think of southerners:

> Mostly as uneducated. They think of us as being less educated and bare-footed (laughing), kind of hillbilly type people is what they think of us as in so many cases. But people that really know them, you know, I think that after they get to know them, know us, they don't feel like they are.

Also Anna Brown (Marion, 72, white):

> When they first come a lot of them think it's negative [the South]. But if they stay 6 months or longer, I think they change. I really do.

As noted previously, some respondents (ten in all, or 21.7%) did mention positive characteristics that they believe non-southerners associate with the South; only one respondent was completely positive in her assessment. The others included some positive traits along with the negative ones. Below are a few examples:

Sandra Winters (Baton Rouge, 35, black):

> They think they [southerners] are dumb. They do. And they know they eat good, because every time we visit [relatives in the North] you have to bring beans and crawfish and crabs and stuff like that. So, but I know that, um, from what I've, talking with my friends, associates, when I first introduced myself as being from Louisiana, "You ain't nothing but an old country bumpkin." You know, that's how they classified, "country bumpkin," whatever that is. So that's how they, they don't think you know as much as they know.

Nick Godfrey (Marion, 53, black):

> I do kind of see that some of the, not necessarily my relatives, but you know some people who are not familiar that I know that's from the North, who I have contact with, still kind of see the southerners as laid-back. Not necessarily lazy, but laid-back. They're not moving as fast. The pace of living's a little slower, and you may have comments on that, negative or positive. I still feel like people in the South are more down to earth, more disciplined. You know cause, and I don't know if it's kidding or not, but sometimes my brother, who's three years older than me but he's got two kids, I've got three, and they're the same ages as mine. So they kind of interact with each other. But sometimes he will tell me that he's threatened to, you know to one of his kids, "I'm going to send you down South," kind of so you can learn a little bit of respect, or you know live down there with your uncle down there in the South so you will learn a little bit more as far as respect and being a gentleman and so forth… So you know, going back on what you asked me earlier, you know [am I] proud to be from the South or proud to be a southerner, that aspect of it I think I would be proud of, if that's the way a lot of the people up North feel about the people in the South.

Wanda Burgess (Nashville, 28, black):

> Hum, I've heard the term "lazy," but I'm not sure if that's correct or not. I don't know how people in another region would view us. I know I've had friends who say that we

> are more friendly. A little bit more understanding, open, and caring. And we're too trustworthy, compared to people in other regions. And I would say I think we are a little bit more trustworthy compared to other people. We have an open heart, because we care. Not that they don't care. We care a little bit more.

I thought it would be useful to look at what traits respondents listed first when answering the question concerning how they thought non-southerners viewed southerners. I was curious about what was the very first thing that came to their minds when asked this question. Out of the 46 self-described southerners who listed different traits in their answer, forty-four (95.7%) named a perceived negative trait first. Only two respondents began with a positive characteristic. One stated that her relatives in the North love coming down South; the other stated that southerners were "laid-back" and said this could be seen as positive or negative. The other 44 respondents began with perceived negative traits, a sampling of which included hicks, dumb, backwoods, stupid, slow (always used derogatorily and generally followed immediately by and adjective such as "ignorant"), not very smart, racist, hillbillies, rednecks, too friendly, lazy, barefoot, braindead, and pregnant all the time. Clearly it does not seem that these southerners believe outsiders think very highly of their social group.

Other than the racial variation I mentioned previously -- that whites were more likely to assert that northerners see southerners as racist -- I did not find other racial differences. Whites and blacks alike mentioned the same types of traits and stereotypes that they thought were held by non-southerners. Neither group seemed to think more positively or negatively about the image of southerners in the eyes of outsiders.

Though overwhelmingly my respondents named negative traits that outsiders associated with the South, when asked if they thought non-southerners had an overall negative or positive view of the South, several commented that the view was positive or

mixed. Out of 32 responses to this question, sixteen (50%) believed non-southerners had a negative view of the region, seven (21.9%) believed they had a positive view, and nine (28.1%) believed the view was mixed and/or changing (to be more positive). Based on the large number of negative traits listed as views of the South, I would have expected that respondents would have been more negative in their overall assessments of non-southerners' assessments. However, those who believed that non-southerners had an overall positive image of the South did not really sound like the image was unequivocally positive, just more positive than negative:

William Lancaster (Marion, 46, white):

> Probably positive. They just look over a lot of stuff, the inbred, that type thing. I think they look over that, but I still think they see it.

Amelia Trudell (Marion, 49, black):

> I would tend to think the way everyone's trying to relocate to North Carolina that it must be positive (laughing).

Wanda Burgess (Nashville, 28, black):

> I would say it's positive. I would say it's positive, because you find out that once people, many people who live in the North, they end up coming here to retire. You know, Florida to retire, so it has to be something good for them to move here eventually.

And Gerald Tyson (Nashville, 65, black):

> It's more positive than it was. I don't know whether we could administer some sort of test to determine that. I would say it's probably more positive. I would put it at 51% [positive] if I had to quantify (laughing).

So as one sees, these do not appear to be resounding affirmations of the South's positive image in the eyes of northerners.

The findings thus far seem fairly straightforward. On the whole, both black and whites southerners think positively about their regional identity as southern, and both black and white southerners think that outsiders hold negative views about the region's

people. Respondents thus appear to have a positive view of their own group, yet they do seem to believe that their regional identity is stigmatized in the eyes of outsiders. So how does this stigma affect them? Do southerners care that others may see them in a negative light?

The Effects of Negative Views

When asked about how the negative views of non-southerners made them feel, my respondents were fairly evenly divided. Some were bothered by the negative views of non-southerners, and some did not really care.[33] Out of 24 respondents who answered this question, thirteen (54.2%) were not bothered by negative views, and eleven (45.8%) were bothered. Those who were bothered by negative views generally stated that these views were not true and/or did not apply to them. They did not want to be associated with these negative traits. For example, I asked Patty Simpson (24, white) of Baton Rouge if negative views of the South bothered her:

> A little bit, because I know it's not true, just like probably some of the views I have about people from the North probably aren't true. But it bothers me a little bit, because I know I'm not, for me personally, I know I'm not uneducated, and I know I'm not, … especially people that think of South Louisiana people, because they think we're all, you know we eat "mudbugs" and, you know, crawdads and crawfish is what we call them, and that's just dirty, trashy stuff, how can you eat that. Stuff like that, I just don't think… south Louisiana is viewed really, especially really bad from the rest of the South, so.

Patty is a college graduate and plans to go to graduate school; she does not want to be thought of as less intelligent. She also takes a great deal of pride in southern culture, particularly Louisiana culture and cuisine, so she is bothered by those who would look

[33] Unfortunately I was not consistent in prompting respondents about how negative images of the South made them feel, hence the small pool of respondents.

down on southerners. Linda Dobbs (Marion, 43, white) talks about how she does not want to be associated with the negative traits often attributed to the region's people:

> I'm thinking specifically about racism, and I think when you say you're a southerner, you immediately think of a Confederate Flag, and ugly stuff. I don't want to be associated with those, with ugly intolerance and… I don't want that part of the South associated with me. I like the other stuff.

She believes that outsiders have both positive and negative views of southerners, and she clearly does not want to be associated with those negative traits[34].

A few respondents can become so bothered by what they see as misperceptions of the South that they will speak out to non-southerners who have offended them. Harry Stanford (Marion, 57, black) talks of non-southerners who come into Marion:

> They think that, for some reason or other, most of them, not all of them, but most of them feel like they're much smarter than we are, and more culturally advanced than we are. It, it, it's very offensive to most folks. I don't stand it; I'll put them in their place (laughing).
>
> Q: I was going to ask you if it bothers you…
>
> A: Yeah it does, but like I said it puts me, I put them in their place. I'll tell them what I think of what they're doing, or of the attitude that they have. Most of the times they, you know, the problem is they're not even aware of what they're doing or how what they say affect folk. And most of them will thank me for it.

Similarly, Brigitte Canning (65, white) of Baton Rouge speaks of her anger when non-southerners act in a condescending manner. Brigitte was actually raised in France, but has lived in Louisiana so long that she now claims a southern identity. But to explain how non-southerners act, she refers to Europe:

> Well people up North kind of remind me of English people (laughing), and they are, you know, they think they are the only ones because they got a queen. And uh, I mean they act, they just look down at us. I have a step-sister now, and a step-brother. They all from England, and uh, they're nice. But you still have that attitude like, well, they're better than us (laughing).
>
> Q: So you think non-southerners have that similar kind of attitude?

[34] Note that even though some respondents did not want to be associated with negative images of the South, no respondent appeared to deny or reject being southern because of outside views of the region.

A: Yeah.

Q: Does that bother you, that they…?

A: Oh when sometime conversation will go in politics or something like that, yes I get mad, and I tell them off (laughing). You know.

In contrast to folks like Brigitte, other respondents were not very concerned about the views of outsiders. Some respondents asserted that they simply did not care what outsiders thought about them. Greg Coppage (51, white) of Baton Rouge speaks first about his father's feelings concerning northerners, then his own opinion:

> My daddy was, he wasn't real educated, but he was a smart guy, and he could do just about anything he wanted to do, you know. So he was a pretty good carpenter. He was a plumber. He was, he wasn't a real good car mechanic, but he could do anything you wanted to do. He felt like sometimes they kind of looked down on him, I guess, maybe people he worked with or things he saw on t.v. or whatever. I don't know what it was. But he, he felt like, that we got that kind of treatment from people up North. It kind of rubbed off on me a little bit, and I can see things. I can see stuff. You can see a lot of subtle things on t.v. and things like that, that would lead to that. But you just got to blow that kind of stuff off. That's just some narrow minded jerk's opinion of a certain part of the country, you know. So as I got older I would just, I wouldn't care what they think and ignore it. Somebody thinks that, that's fine.

Greg relays that his father was bothered by how northerners viewed southerners, but Greg himself asserts that he is not concerned with the opinions of outsiders. Brent Daniels (62, white) of Nashville expresses a similar sentiment when asked if he was bothered by negative views:

> No. It doesn't bother me. I could care less. You call me whatever you want to call me. It doesn't bother me (laughing).

Even though both Brent and Greg claim that they are not bothered by negative views, there does seem to be a hint of defiance in their answers. One would expect their next phrase to be something along the lines of, "to hell with them!"

Betty Richardson (48, white) of Marion, though denying that negative views bother her, is more explicitly defiant.

> Q: And when people voice negative views or if you think of those negative views, do they bother you at all?
>
> A: Oh no, I just, my accent just gets much thicker (laughing). No, it doesn't bother me at all, because, you know we have so few people that come into the area and really experience the area, they go whitewater rafting, or they go to the Biltmore House, and they do things, that don't leave loving the area.

When encountering negative views about the South, Betty combats these views, and in some sense demonstrates her own southern pride and identity, by pouring on her southern accent. But at the same time, she seems to think that these views are born out of unfamiliarity with the South. Betty does event planning for groups coming to the mountain South. As she explains, most who come to the area and experience it leave with a positive view of the region.

Similar to Betty, many respondents who claimed not to be bothered by negative views implied, or directly stated, that non-southerners were the ignorant ones. If northerners think southerners are backwards and uneducated, it just shows their lack of knowledge about the region. Take for example Rebecca Laster (23, black) of Nashville:

> Q: Do negative views about the South bother you?
>
> A: They used to. When I first went up to Virginia and went to college, I was like, "wow, why are they treating me like this? This is odd." And I was real upset about it, but, I mean then I realized oh that's their ignorance. If they're going to be that narrow minded, that's not my problem. I know we're just as smart in the South. Because we have a twang and we say things like that doesn't mean we are not as intelligent. So, I just ignored it and said if you're thinking like that you're just ignorant.

Rebecca's first real experience with northerners occurred when she went to a private college in Virginia[35]. Initially she was bothered by the way non-southerners treated her, feeling that she was perceived as not as smart because she was southern. However, in time she concluded that they, the non-southerners who treated her in a condescending

[35] Though her school was in Virginia, she claimed that most students at this school viewed themselves as being from the "east coast" rather than from the South.

manner, were truly the ignorant ones. Sally Polito (22, white) of Nashville has a similar view of non-southerners:

> Q: So did those, does that bother you the way outsiders think of southerners?
>
> A: I don't know if it bothers me so much as just it's like, you know, it's just like, "oh, they don't know." You know, it's like, "ugghh." I mean I can't really say, I probably shouldn't say anything because I don't know anything about them, I just go off of what I hear as well. So it's just lack of knowledge, really. They don't go there [to the South], and I haven't really been there [to the North], so you just kind of assume what you hear is correct.

Sally also concludes that non-southerners who have negative views of the region simply do not know about the South, just as she does not know much about other regions outside of the South.

Sally and Rebecca both excuse or dismiss the negative attitudes of non-southerners because they deem these folks as ignorant or lacking accurate information about the South. A few respondents went one step further, not only implying that these outsiders were uninformed, but also that they were missing out by not seeing the wonderful things about the South. Marge Mayfield (31, black) of Marion:

> Q: How do you think they [non-southerners] view southerners?
>
> A: View us? They think we're too friendly and stupid (laughing). You know that! They don't think we know how to survive.
>
> Q: Do those attitudes bother you at all, the way…?
>
> A: No, I just be thinking if you only knew. You the one that got it rough. I braided a little white guy's hair a few weeks back that was from New York. And he was always, he kept telling me how his mom started fearing for his life, because they were poor. Hungry one half the time, and he got to running around with this crowd and got shot a couple of times. And it was just because, you know, what his mama wasn't doing. Was no dad, it was a mom and a grandma, and what they wasn't getting by with, I guess he felt that it was his place to try to help out, you know. And it just causes them to get caught up. So they sent him back down here [to the South] because the grandmother come back home as opposed to living that lifestyle, she just couldn't keep up with it.

Marge is a beautician, and she is speaking of a young man who came into her shop recently. His mother sent him back to the South because she thought he would be safer.

For Marge, this story provides an example of the benefits of the South as opposed to the North. It is safer here. You don't have to struggle so much to survive. And for those who look down on the South, she thinks they simply do not realize how good we have it here.

Jennifer Dartmouth (54, white) of Nashville explains why she doesn't mind if non-southerners think badly of the South:

> Q: How do you think southerners are viewed by people outside of the region?
>
> A: Backwards, close-minded, too conservative, too religious, um, uh, those pretty much covers it…
>
> Q: Do you think it's an overall positive or negative view?
>
> A: No, I think it's a negative view.
>
> Q: And does that bother you?
>
> A: Um, not really (laughing).
>
> Q: What? Why not (as she continues to laugh)?
>
> A: I just think, you know, let them think that, and maybe they won't come here (laughing).

Jennifer again highlights this theme that outsiders simply do not understand the South and it's people. They do not see the great things about this region. But in Jennifer's case, this does not bother her. If they think badly of the South, then perhaps they will not move here. It should be noted that throughout her interview she worried both about migration into the South from different regions and about how this migration was changing the South.

One final note should be made concerning how my respondents felt about negative views of the South. Even though they were evenly divided, with roughly half saying that negative views bothered them and half asserting that these views did not

bother them, there was some difference in responses by race. Blacks were more likely to say they were not bothered by negative views of the region (seven whites, or 43.7%, and six blacks, 75%, said they were not bothered). Looking at those who were bothered by negative views, nine whites (56.3%) stated they were bothered, while only two black respondents (25%) were bothered by negative views. Of course only 24 respondents answered this question, of which sixteen (66.7%) were white and only eight (33.3%) were black. Nonetheless, it is striking that only two African Americans were bothered by negative views of the South. This may provide some indication that black southerners are less invested in their southern identity than whites[36]. Unfortunately more data would be needed to truly examine this possibility.

Experiences of Discrimination

It is fairly clear that although most of my respondents speak positively of their co-regionalists, they believe that southerners are seen in a negative light by outsiders. So we may conclude that in general southerners see themselves as a stigmatized group, a group that is to some degree "tainted" or "discounted" by outsiders (Goffman 1963). But Link and Phelan (2001) argue that stigma does not simply involve this notion that a group is characterized by negative stereotypes. Stigma also includes a component of discrimination. In other words, people who are stigmatized are treated as somehow inferior because of their stigma, or they at least believe themselves to be treated

[36] The importance of southern identity for blacks and whites will be discussed in the next chapter. Nonetheless, I should note that the analysis of Southern Focus Poll data from the fall of 1997 through the spring of 2001 indicates that African American residents of the South are more likely to say that their southern identity is not important to them, compared to white residents.

differently. I explored this idea by asking my self-defined southerners if they felt that they had experienced discrimination based on their southern identity.

The majority of my respondents stated that they did not feel that they had ever experienced discrimination based on their southern identity. Out of 51 self-claimed southerners who responded to this question, only seven (13.7%) stated that they had experienced discrimination due to their regional identity. I asked these seven respondents if they could recall a specific instance when they experienced discrimination. Two could not recall any specific instance; five did relay instances of perceived discrimination. The following are a few examples:

Claire Kendall (74, white) of Baton Rouge:

> Q: Have you ever felt discriminated against because you are a southerner?
>
> A: Oh yes, there have been times that I have been. Just like um, let's see when I was in college, and we had these movie stars; they were advertising this picture. I've even forgotten the name of it, because this was in the '50s. And so these movies stars came over to Hattiesburg, and because I was president of a girls' organization, well they had some college students come. And we had a banquet for them, and they had us sit with the different people and everything, and so they had all these drinks and all that. And because some of us you know did not drink with them, well they, they kind of acted like we were really, you know, dumb. So I felt discriminated against at that time, but it didn't bother me because I said, "well, you can do like you want to do, that's your right, and then I have the right to do like I want to." So it didn't bother me, but I hate being discriminated against.

Claire Kendall feels that these movie stars looked down on her and her classmates, judging them to be "dumb." She felt that they were not treated very well in this instance. However, on the whole this appears to be a relatively minor incident that did not really have a lasting effect on her life. Similarly, Lisa Harrison (41, white) of Nashville recalls feeling mistreated when she began college.

> Q: Do you ever feel like you've been discriminated against because of it?
>
> A: When I was younger, I felt put down about my accent. And I guess that's the best way to describe it. And that feeling lasted a long time, when I was younger. Now I have

> a tinge of it, and I move on. And I think, I think about 50% of it was in my own mind. I think about 50% of it was, um, I mean I first noticed it in college, and, you know, I felt a very competitive atmosphere, and I felt it as a strike against me in a competitive atmosphere where I wasn't taken quite as seriously by other students. I never had any problems with the professors because they were always in the South as well. They never, that was never a problem. But now I just find that people smile and are a bit entertained by it [her accent]. I don't feel… the only thought process that I have is, "gosh just because it's a thick accent, don't think I'm uneducated." That's the only sentence, the thought that goes through my mind. And then I think to myself, "good grief, who cares what they think." And so it's not for very long now, and I don't feel discriminated against. Now, though I may be, and I don't notice it. And I think I noticed it more than I was discriminated against when I was younger (laughing).

Lisa Harrison attended a college in the South. The attitudes of her professors did not bother her because they were southerners as well. However, she encountered students from outside the South, and she felt like they did not think she was as smart because of her southern accent. Now that she is older, she says that she no longer feels discriminated against (and if she is, she does not really care). Further, she is not really sure if she was treated differently by her peers in college because of her accent and southernness, or if it was simply all in her mind.

The experiences of Lisa Harrison and Claire Kendall do not come across as terribly damaging or detrimental to their lives. These experiences have engendered feelings that others may have looked down upon them, but this does not seem to be treatment that has really affected their life chances or left lasting scars. In contrast, Linda Dobbs (43, white) of Marion does believe that her southern identity has affected her life chances. She feels that she has had to work harder in her profession, pharmaceutical sales, in order to overcome negative stereotypes of southerners:

> Q: Have you ever felt discriminated against because you are a southerner?
>
> A: Well, actually I just kind of said that [earlier in the interview]. I think I've had to fight pretty hard professionally because I'm a southerner, because you know I do work for a huge company, and they are [like] "you're laid-back, you're easy-going, you're not assertive or aggressive enough to be accomplished in this profession." It's definitely

> something you got to stand up… it's just like, you know, you still have to do that simply because you're female in most professions, mine included. So being from the South isn't that much different.

Though here Linda talks about how being southern may have hindered her career, because she is viewed as "not aggressive" enough, at other times in the interview Linda speaks of how her southernness has helped her career because she has better rapport with her clients and can easily build relationships, traits she associates with southern people.

Only one respondent asserted that he experienced discrimination, based on what he perceived as his southernness, on a regular basis. Paul Madison (48, white) of Marion is a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. He often wears clothing that bears the Confederate Flag and has Confederate symbols on his truck. Here he speaks of some of his experiences with southern discrimination:

> Q: Do you ever feel discriminated against because you're a southerner?
>
> A: On a daily basis.
>
> Q: How so?
>
> A: Alright, we've established that occasionally I have been known to wear clothing with a flag on it. I was going to a meeting in Charlotte one morning. Go in to a Bob Evans restaurant down there and sit down and eat breakfast. We walk in and sit down, and you hear this scurrying going on in the background. And I looked at one of the guys with me, and I said, "We've been noticed." So a few minutes later this young lady comes over and says, "I'll be your server today." We had a great breakfast. We were getting ready to leave, and the girl that had been our waitress and the guy that refused to serve us [a black man] and another one were standing back over in the corner. And I walked up, paid the check, turned around, and I had a $100 bill in my hand. I turned around and walked over to the waitress, and I handed it to her in front of the black guy [who had refused to be their server]. And I said, "I appreciate the service," (laughing). Went to the meeting, came back in there for lunch. That time the black guy came over and waited on us. I got up to leave after the dinner. I left him a penny face down on the table as I left. He got his tip, so, you know (laughing). There are ways of getting your point across[37].
>
> Q: Do you mainly feel discriminated against when you're wearing the flag, or in other instances?

[37] For more on anti-black discrimination in public places, see Feagin (1991).

> A: It's like turning on a beacon. But, you know, a lot of times around here it doesn't happen because, you know I, I have a tendency to work in circles that I'm comfortable in. And uh, dealing with the public is just mostly, you know, people understand when they're coming to deal with me, they're coming to deal with a southern company. But, you know it's a trip to watch it, because you can, you know people's attitudes are crazy.

Paul Madison feels discriminated against when he wears or displays the Confederate Flag, which he believes represents his heritage as a southerner. He felt that the black waiter at the Bob Evans restaurant would not serve his table because he was wearing the Confederate Flag. It is doubtful that this interaction was premised on discrimination due to his "southernness," but rather to what was seen as his racial outlook. Many African Americans in the South associate the Confederate Flag with racism. However, this type of extreme "southern pride" and embracement of Confederate symbols was not characteristic of my respondents. Only three other respondents seemed to express this intense "southern pride," which may also represent racial pride, two of whom were also members of the SCV (William Lancaster and Mark Hobbs). This type of "discrimination" was not reported by other respondents.

I have offered a few examples of respondents who felt that they have experienced discrimination based on their southern identity. But on the whole, most respondents did not report ever feeling that they had experienced discrimination of this kind. A few commented that they probably had not experienced discrimination because they stayed in the South most of the time. This seems to be a quite plausible explanation. My respondents all live in the South, and most have been here the majority of their lives. As a consequence, they may not have been around northerners enough to experience discrimination. A few respondents commented that discrimination was too strong of a word. At times they may have felt that non-southerners looked down on them, or that they were made fun of because of their accent, but this was not serious enough in their

minds to constitute discrimination. Donna Levert (49, black) of Nashville makes this point:

> Q: Have you ever felt discriminated against because you are a southerner?
>
> A: Not discriminated against. I think people, not really in that strong of a sense. I guess if you've ever been discriminated against, then you tend to view that in a, that word in a slightly different context. But I think that you know people, I don't know that people discriminate against you, I think they definitely evaluate you a little bit more closely when you're a southerner as it relates to certain issues. Uh, if you're for instance a southern intellectual, and the minute they hear that sugar in your voice or whatever then they tend to, you know, look a little bit more closely at what you have to say. But once you get past that, that's all, because they really do want to hear what you have to say. But now I don't feel discriminated against because of… there are plenty of other things that I am discriminated against, you know race, gender, a lot of other things that come before my southernness I believe.

Donna does believe that southerners are scrutinized a little more by non-southerners. Their intelligence may be doubted initially. However for Donna, a person who has experienced discrimination based on race and gender, this type of scrutiny based on regional attributes does not take on the same intensity as these other types of discrimination. Interestingly, several other black southerners I interviewed made this type of statement. When asked if they had experienced discrimination due to their southernness, they would comment that they had not experienced discrimination due to their regional identity, but they had experienced discrimination due to their race. These types of comments, combined with the fact that only one black respondent asserted that he had experienced discrimination based on his southernness, suggests that for African Americans their racial identity is more salient than their regional identity, at least when it comes to perceived discrimination. It is their racial identity that is more readily apparent to others, and the identity that provokes discrimination, not their regional identity. As one African American respondent commented when I asked her if she had felt discriminated against based on being southern, "I can't, I don't have that freedom,

darling, because being visibly, ethnically associated with African Americans, it's difficult for me to even ascertain that." For her, being black was such a salient identity, something that was much more likely to evoke discrimination, that she really did not know if she could even recognize regional discrimination. Any discrimination she experienced would be more readily attributed in her mind to her status as African American.

Taken as a whole, these data suggest that few southerners have actually experienced discrimination because of their regional identity. Yet, most southerners still feel that they are viewed negatively by those outside of the region. So it seems that southerners experience or perceive their identity as stigmatized, as being subject to prejudicial attitudes, but do not feel that it elicits discriminatory treatment. The discussion of the data thus far points to some answers to questions about social identity posed in the first chapter. If southerners perceive their identity as stigmatized, why do they continue to identify with this social group in such large numbers? It is to this question that I now turn.

Social Identity Theory: The Case of Southerners

When I began this project, I hoped that by interviewing southerners I would be able to resolve what appears to be a paradox. According to social identity theory, people seek to have positive social identities that will enhance individual self-esteem and value (Tajfel 1978). If this is the case, why do most residents of the South claim an identity that they themselves believe is negatively valued in the larger culture? I argued in the first chapter that this paradox is not problematic if southern identity was seen by

respondents as an ascribed identity, based on birth or family history in the region. In such a case, southerners would not really be "choosing" a negatively-valued identity; instead, they would feel that they were "naturally" led to do so based on their ancestry, whether it is stigmatized or not. Despite the fact that the identity may be stigmatized in the larger culture, residents feel compelled to claim it.

So do southerners see the identity as a matter of ascription? The answer to this question is not straightforward, but after examining the data I believe generally they do view this identity as ascribed. And here I should make a caveat. Respondents see their own southernness as an ascribed identity, but this does not mean that this notion of ascription applies to other people. In other words, as discussed in the last chapter, most of my respondents asserted that they were southern because they were born in the South. Also, most respondents who were born in the South had long-standing family roots in the region. So their self-assertions of southernness were generally based on their ancestry. Therefore, the identity appears to be a matter of ascription. They are southern by birth – it is just a fact, an aspect of who they are. As one will recall, many respondents stated that their parents never really talked about being southern because this identity was simply "known" or "taken for granted".

The notion of ascription is bolstered by the fact that out of all my respondents who were born (and raised) in the South, only two chose not to identify themselves as southern. These two respondents viewed the identity as a matter of choice. Both of these respondents refused to claim the identity for political reasons. John Marshall, a 68 year old white man from Nashville, talks of his decision to reject the southern identity:

> I grew up in Birmingham… It was really very much a southern white society in which I grew up, segregated schools… I went to Duke [for college]. I still recall this vividly. They had freshman assemblies, and the President of North Carolina A&M, he came and

> gave a speech to the all white freshman class of my year. He started off saying, well you won't believe this but Duke and his college had the same ratings, they were both AA or AAA or whatever it was, went through all of the things in which they were similar, and then he said, now let me tell you about the differences. And I mean the differences were as you might imagine stark. There were no laboratories for research at that time at his college, and basically it was a very run down and under-funded place. And then he talked about his personal experience and trying to travel across the United States while being black… I don't know what it was, but it was an experience that really turned me around and made me even more hostile because I had been always taught "separate but equal," everything was just fine, and here was this guy telling me, "no, it's not." I mean this is total discrimination… I was not interested in identifying as a southerner or someone from Alabama or whatever. My friends at Duke were a mixture of people from the South and from the Northeast, but basically I was more interested in connecting with people from the Northeast. And in fact, they made fun of what accent I had, so I got rid of it. And uh, I kind of, I never looked back.

John made a very deliberate choice to reject his southern identity, even to the point of purposely losing his southern accent. The rejection was based on a feeling that the South, particularly the white South, was a place of injustice and oppression. Therefore, he took a stance and decided that he would not identify with this place.

John Marshall's experience is, at least in this study, a unique one. He felt that he had an ability to choose whether or not he was southern, quite similar to Waters' (1990) notion that later generation American immigrants have "ethnic options," or the ability to select what parts of their ancestry with which they choose to identify[38]. The vast majority of respondents did not share this sentiment. They did not seem to view their southernness as a choice. Even if they did not like certain aspects of the South, they never seemed to doubt their own southernness, or feel that they could choose to be otherwise. Kate Thomisee (26, white) of Nashville provides a good example. During her interview she had many negative things to say about the South: she did not see the South as very cosmopolitan, and she felt that many southerners were conservative (a negative

[38] Though it would appear that these "options" pertain more to whites in America. For African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans, ethnic identity would be more a matter of ascription/imposition.

quality in her assessment), did not take education seriously, and were a bit behind the times. She spoke of wanting to leave the South and move to a more urban city in the North. Despite having many criticisms of the South, and wanting to leave the region, she never questioned her own southernness. When asked if she was southern, she readily replied, "yes," and she explained that she was southern because she had never lived anywhere else -- her family on both sides also traced their roots back to the Civil War[39].

So in general my respondents did not see their own southernness as a matter of choice. Out of 55 self-identified southerners, forty-five (81.8%) included their birth in the region as an important factor that made them southern. However, it is interesting that respondents allowed more volition or choice when it came to the identity claims of others. When I asked respondents about what types of people they thought were southern or could be southern, thirty-one out of the 52 self-claimed southerners (or 59.6%) who answered this question asserted that people could move to the south and adopt the culture, thereby becoming southern. So for outsiders the identity, at least in the minds of many southerners, is a matter of choice, not ascription. The fact that most self-identified southerners mentioned their ancestry in the region may indicate that birth in the region is a more forceful and certain way for people to "prove" or "claim" that they are southern. However, it is possible that the element of choice that southerners extend to in-migrants, the possibility of becoming part of the group, is a recognition of the cultural aspect of the identity. Place identity is also about learning and appreciating a culture and people, and is not solely a matter of ancestry, however important it may be in permitting one a stronger claim to southernness.

[39] It should be noted that she also had positive things to say about the South, particularly that the younger generation is more forward-thinking and tolerant.

The tendency of my respondents to see their own southernness as a matter of ascription resolves the problematic paradox noted above. My respondents did not choose to identify with a negatively valued group. On the contrary, most feel that they have this social identity due to birth in the region. Also resolving the paradox, it does not seem that southerners evaluate their group negatively in comparison to non-southerners or northerners. In the case of southerners, the issue of stigma is complicated. Even though it is clear from the interviews that southerners feel that non-southerners hold many negative views of their group, southerners themselves see their group in a positive light. Overwhelmingly both African Americans and whites described southerners as having positive traits. So, returning to social identity theory, southerners evaluate their own group positively, even if they think that non-southerners do not share this sentiment. Respondents tend to think that non-southerners are ill-informed about southerners, and therefore dismiss their perceived criticisms[40].

Summary Comments

The case of southerners focuses attention on the importance of viewing the objects of the processes of stigmatization as more than passive victims. Goffman (1963) argues that the stigmatized tend to hold the same view of themselves as the larger society or "audience." In such a case, southerners would see themselves as they believe the rest of the country perceives them, in mostly negative terms. However, southerners' views of themselves are quite different than the larger cultural images of the South and its people. When studying stigma, it is therefore important to understand if the objects of

[40] Also of importance, it should be pointed out that the very fact that my respondents readily described traits and opinions of southerners and non-southerners indicates that these respondents still view the South

stigmatization perceive negative evaluations by others as fair or valid. In general, my respondents do not seem to view negative evaluations of southerners as fair. In addition, social context probably functions to shield southerners from the effects of stigma. Even if they feel that non-southerners look down on their social group, they may not be affected or exposed to this stigma very often. My respondents who claimed to be southern live in the South, surrounded by other group members. Therefore ample social support exists to maintain positive group images.

We tend to assume that groups which can stigmatize others have more power than the objects of stigmatization. In a sense this may be true, as they have the power to shape larger cultural images. But this does not mean that the objects of stigmatization have to accept these definitions of their group. In the case of southerners, not only do they reject negative images of their group, but in some ways these negative images seem to make southerners assert their identity more strongly. Seeing one's group as misunderstood, as an underdog, can therefore be a source of unity, a source of pride. As one may recall, the only respondent who felt discriminated against "on a daily basis" was Paul Madison, a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (a "southern heritage" group). Also recall Betty Richardson, who said her accent "just gets much thicker" when she encounters folks who view the South negatively. These types of statements were not uncommon among my respondents. So rather than feeling ashamed or a loss of esteem in the face of stigma, it seems that many southerners feel a sense of solidarity and pride in the face of criticism. In this very precise sense, stigma can be empowering.

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as a unique region and southerners as unique people within our nation.

CHAPTER V

SOUTHERN IDENTITY AS A RACIALIZED IDENTITY

Race has played an undeniably important role in the history of the South and the construction of southern identity. Of particular significance has been the relationship between whites and blacks in the South. In the words of U.B. Phillips, the South was a "white man's country," – thus, as Griffin et. al (2005) pointed out, "southerners" were white (Phillips 1928). As discussed in Chapter 1, the literature and research on southern identity has often focused on white southerners, leaving out black southerners. This gap in the literature exists despite the fact that black residents in the South are just as likely, if not more so, as whites to identify as southern (see Southern Focus Poll data in Chapter 1). Very little is known, however, about how black southerners perceive their regional identity. This is a critical omission because, according to many scholars of the region, African Americans are now beginning to reclaim their southern identity after the demise of Jim Crow (Stack 1996; Horwitz 1998; Levinson 1998; Cobb 1999b; Wilson 1999). In this chapter I explore the meaning of southern identity for both blacks and whites in the South, focusing on the importance each group places on the identity, how racial and regional identities intersect for each group, and how the past is used by each group to ground their sense of regionalism.

The Importance of Southern Identity for Black and White Southerners

There are several ways to begin to assess the importance of the southern identity for blacks and whites based on my interview data. The most direct data bearing on this question will be examined first. During the interviews, I directly asked my respondents who identified as southern, "Is it very important to you that you are a southerner?" My respondents were fairly evenly divided on this question. Out of 54 self-professed southerners who responded to this question, twenty-nine (53.7%) said that the identity was not very important, twenty-one (38.9%) stated that the identity was very important, and four (7.4%) respondents felt that the identity was mildly important to them. Keeping in mind that this is not a random sample, my black respondents were more likely to say the identity was not very important to them -- 17 blacks (63%) compared to 12 whites (44.4%) -- while whites were more likely to say that the identity was either mildly or very important -- 15 whites (55.6%) compared to 10 blacks (37%). Thus, there was some noticeable difference in the importance of being southern by race, at least based on responses to this question. These findings are consistent with Southern Focus Poll data (see Table 5, Appendix A), which shows that 42.7% of black southerners assert that their southern identity is either "not very important" or "not at all important," compared to 35.5% of white southerners. Conversely, 64.5% of white southerners claim that being southern is "somewhat important" or "very important," compared to 57.3% of black southerners. Further, black southerners are more likely to assert that their southern identity is "not at all important" to them (28.3% of blacks make this claim, as compared to 17.6% of whites). I will speculate as to why these differences may exist later.

Cultural Reasons

Virtually all of the white respondents and roughly half of the African Americans who stated that being southern was important spoke of such things as the culture, morals, values, and political leanings of those in the region as reasons for their assessments. In the following excerpt, Linda Dobbs (43), a white woman from Marion, discusses why being southern is important to her:

> I like it. I like being able to say I'm from the South. I don't like some of the negative connotations that go along with that, … and I say negative, but I'm sure not everyone would even think those things are negative, because I am more liberal than I think is generally associated with someone from the South. I like saying I'm a southerner because I do like sipping lemonade, and I do like an easier, laid-back lifestyle. I do like to think that I have southern manners. I guess that kind of says it all, the manners part. Business-wise, I am in sales, but even my approach in sales is more of a relationship approach than an aggressive, I'm here to get this at all costs kind of approach. And that works for me because it fits my personality. You know I definitely see the South in that, too.

Note that when Linda says being southern is important to her, she emphasizes what she believes are the positive aspects of being southern. She does not like to be associated with what she perceives as some of the negative aspects of the South. (She later goes on to explain that by negative views, she is talking about racism and intolerance.) These statements remind us of the discussion of stigma in the last chapter, where there is a tendency of many southerners to think primarily of the positive aspects of the region and to disassociate themselves from negative views. The many positive things about the South that she describes generally involve the culture of the region, by which I mean the values, customs, speech patterns, and beliefs that are associated with southerners and that are generally seen to distinguish southerners from the people of other regions. Being southern is important to her because she enjoys the culture, feels that it is a part of herself, and even feels that her southernness helps in the business world.

Another white resident of Marion, Betty Richardson (age, 48), discusses the importance of being southern, focusing on both a love of the land, the culture, and people:

> Q: How important is being a southerner to you?
>
> A: It's pretty important. I'm proud to be a southerner. You know I think we live in God's country almost. We have the mountains, and we can drive in a day's time to the coast. What more could you ask for? I've often thought that I would hate to live out in somewhere like Nebraska, and be landlocked so much. Yeah, I'm very proud of being a southerner, not just because I live here. I think because, I think southerners embody a congeniality that a lot of times other people don't have. I'm proud that our, our traditions and the things that we carry on are very southern, yeah. I even love southern cuisine. I think, you know, the food's better in the South (laughing), so yeah.

Similarly, Grace Conners (83), a black woman from Baton Rouge, speaks of her home:

> Q: Is it important to you that you're a southerner?
>
> A: Yes ma'am. I'm proud I'm a southerner.
>
> Q: What makes you proud?
>
> A: I just love it. [It's] a nice place. [You can] raise gardens and farm. People get along good. They don't fuss and fight. Everybody seems to get along good.

Rebecca Laster (23), a young black woman from Nashville, also cites the good people in the South as one reason being southern is important to her:

> People here, we're laid back. We're nice. We hold doors for people. I held the door for somebody in New York. They looked like, looked at me like I was crazy. If you're nice to someone down here, you say, "Hi," to them, they're just going to say, "Hi," back. They're going to be nice to you back. In other parts of the country, people are more cynical.

Several respondents noted that the values and political views of those in the South made the identity important to them. Claire Kendall (74, white) of Baton Rouge:

> Q: How important is it to you that you are a southerner?
>
> A: Well it has something to do, it has a lot to do probably with the way I vote, and you know my political views. I'm sure it has a lot to do with that.
>
> Q: How so?

> A: Well it, like it was so funny that when we toured, we took this trip, a tour group through New England, and I thought, you know, you think of the Republicans as being, starting with Lincoln, President Lincoln and all that. Well all over New England everything is Democrats now. And, and then in the South it's become a lot more Republican in the last few years. So I found that strange. But you know I can understand because they're a lot more liberal than we are. They look at things in a different way than we look at them.

For Claire, being southern is important because it has affected her political views. In this passage Claire uses New England to contrast political views outside of the South. Whereas "they" are more liberal and look at things differently, "we" in the South are not that way. As you may have gathered, Claire is a conservative Republican.

Being southern is also very important to Peter Nelson (21), a white student from Nashville. He cites religious, moral, and political reasons for its significance in his life.

> Q: Is it very important to you that you're a southerner?
>
> A: Yes, yes. If I go to grad school in a school outside the South I'm going to put a bumper sticker on my door that says "American by birth, Southern by the grace of God" (laughing). Yeah, I do like being from the South.
>
> Q: What in particular makes it an important part of who you are?
>
> A: One salient characteristic would be religion, but it's more than just that. It's social practice that's tied into that loosely. It's maybe moral behavior, not specifically religious, or maybe not even moral behavior but social behavior regarding, I don't know, family, family values. I plan to teach somewhere near Memphis so I can be near my family. So when I have kids they will be near their grandparents. And all the family except for one cousin, from both my mom and dad's side of the family, lives in Memphis. I think, say contrasting Northeastern behavior, I do admire the fact that it's clear that northeasterners are better educated than southerners, no question. However, I don't like the faster pace life that goes along with the economic and educational success. I prefer a slower paced life. I do work a lot, but my goal is not to be a workaholic, but to have a balanced life of family and friends and work at the same time. And I see more of that balanced life in the South than in the North.

Again, for Peter being southern represents participating in a culture that he appreciates, probably because he has internalized these southern traits and values throughout his life in the region. You may also note that Peter, like Claire, uses the Northeast as a comparison group to contrast the way things are in the South, which he prefers.

Southern History

Whereas most whites and about half of black respondents discussed cultural aspects of the South that made the identity important in their lives, there was one key difference in the responses by race. Over half of the black respondents (six out of the ten who claimed the identity was important to them) included references to race or racial history as a factor that made their regional identity important. No whites included racial issues in their responses. Donna Levert (Nashville, 49, black):

> Q: How important is being a southerner to you?
>
> A: It's very important. I don't think I ever intend to be anything else. I've never had any desire to live anywhere else other than the South. There was a time when I thought about living in the Midwest, but I think that some of the issues that troubled me about the South in the 1950s and 60s have migrated to the Midwest and to the western states. I think that, you know, there are some people who tend to believe that some of the racist hate groups have moved. The geographical focus if you will, the geographical focus of that sentiment has moved to the Midwest. I wouldn't say the west, far western states. But it's there now, the thing that we fought against in the South all those years is there. So for that reason, you know, might as well stay here, because those battles have already been fought in this battleground.

Donna brings up the history of racial oppression in the South when discussing the importance of her southern identity. Donna does not want to leave the region because she feels that many of the battles fought in the South over race have now moved elsewhere. She does not seem to want to have to fight those battles again.

In general, white and black southerners' views of southern history are often quite different. For the black respondents who brought up this history in their discussion of the identity's importance in their lives, being southern represented pride in the struggles and triumphs of African Americans in the region. Regional history was deeply intertwined with their race. In contrast, whites, as noted above, did not bring up race when they incorporated references to history in their responses. So these different uses of history

were quite noticeable when each race talked about why being southern was important to them. Three white respondents brought up history in their explanations.

Mark Hobbes (Marion, 38, white):

> Q: How important to you is being a southerner?
>
> A: It's very important, because over the years I've come to appreciate this part of the country so much more. I would not want to live in any other part of the country. I really wouldn't. I feel, I feel my roots are here. I feel a sense of pride of being from the South. And not just in things like Confederate heritage. I'm a model railroader. I like to build model trains, in addition to doing SCV stuff. I have a lot of books about trains. All of my books about trains are about southern trains… And that's just an example, because there are so many other things that I feel like that the South has been either denigrated, or stereotyped, or just plain ignored. The Revolutionary War, for instance. A lot of battles, important battles, were fought here in the South during the Revolutionary War… The industrial revolution. The textile mills that were here in the South were very important. Rural electrification, the TVA and Duke Power, which we have here in North Carolina. That was a part of progress in the 20th century, bringing electricity to people who had never had it before.

Mark is greatly interested in the history of the South. He seems to want to convey that southerners are more important than many people realize. Southern history has helped shape the country. But notice that he does not discuss an enormous part of the South's history, racial turmoil. Even when he talks of the Confederacy (as he notes, he is a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans[41]) in other parts of this interview, he rarely focuses on race. William Lancaster (46, white), also of Marion and a member of the SCV, discusses history as well:

> Q: How important to you is being a southerner?
>
> A: Important? Well I just think it's pretty cool that we're from the South, because, you know, everybody…going back to that, what I was telling you about the Confederate soldiers at re-enactments, everybody wants to play Confederate soldiers and dress up like Robert E. Lee. Uh, but as far as being important, uh, you know, I'm a southerner, but

[41] Of the 59 self-professed southerners in my study, four informed me that they were members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans. I did not explicitly ask respondents if they belonged to any "southern heritage" groups, so it is possible that this number may have been larger.

> first of all I'm an American southerner. I like the climate, I mean you know, most think it's a good place to live[42].

And Jennifer Dartmouth of Nashville (54, white):

> Q: How important is being a southerner to you?
>
> A: How important? Um, (pause), hum. That's a tough one. I just don't know if I have an answer for that. I think it's, hum, I think it's (pause), hum, mildly important (laughing). It's not, it's not the overwhelming, I mean I find comfort in being from this part of the country. I don't, I can't really, I'm not sure why, it's just an interesting history and I like the language and I appreciate the source of that language and the literature goes with it. I find it, I think I just find it comforting to have that in my, as part of my background.

Jennifer Dartmouth only briefly mentions the history of the South, describing it as "interesting." William Lancaster talks about how it is "cool" to be a Confederate in re-enactments. All of these discussions in response to the question of why southern identity is important to these individuals have a similar quality: history is seen as a hobby, an interesting, and for some seemingly superficial, aspect of the South that is enjoyable to explore. It is not explicitly used, however, as a moral standard with which to judge the past.

Compare the responses of whites to those of black southerners who spoke of how history has affected the importance that they give to their regional identification.

Shonda Murphy (Baton Rouge, 57, black):

> Q: Is it very important to you that you're a southerner?
>
> A: I think it, yes I would say yes. It's important to me, and I'm proud of it now. I'm very proud of it.
>
> Q: Why is that, what is it about it?
>
> A: Why would I say that I'm proud of it? Because I think that being reared in the South I've had to overcome some things. I've had to deal with issues that other people chose to run from. You know a lot of people left the South because they did not want to deal with the issues of racism, or things not quite being equal. I remember my first job I ever had

[42] Based on data from the Southern Focus Polls, most southerners (over 90%) claim to place the importance of their national identity above their regional identity.

> in Jackson, when I went to school there. It was at a café. And [I was] so glad to have the job. And I just never thought about myself as less, you know. I was right out of high school, and they hired me on the spot. And I only knew that the place had one side. I didn't know it was a white and a black side. I didn't even know that until I went to the kitchen, and I went past, and then I went through another part, and it was the white section. And it's not like I hadn't seen it before, so you don't think about feeling bad about it. I couldn't blame myself for it. You might not want it to be that way, but you don't allow that to demean you to the point of saying, "Well, I'm less than," or whatever.

For Shonda the history of the South goes beyond being "interesting." It has fundamentally shaped who she is in ways about which she is quite conscious. She concludes that she is a stronger person due to staying in the South, confronting and dealing with the racial oppression. Fred Clump (58, black) in Nashville also talks about how being raised in the South has made him a stronger person:

> Q: How important is it to you today that you are a southerner?
>
> A: Well I find it, one of the things I appreciate about my southern roots is that in terms of where we are, one is more comfortable knowing that they have this history, which reflects itself in various attitudes, and you don't have to think about them and you don't have to question them. I think the fact that I had to, I attended a segregated boarding school for high school. It was a military academy, in the South. It had all the southern tradition… And I think that experience, one, starting at 14 years old, having to travel across the segregated South in a segregated public transportation system to attend a segregated military academy was a unique experience.
>
> Q: Where was the school located?
>
> A: Virginia, about 35 miles west of Richmond, the former capital of the Confederacy.
>
> Q: Do you think in a sense those experiences made you stronger in a way? You were talking about traveling across the South and…
>
> A: Oh absolutely. And I think it allows one to develop a more calm attitude toward American in particular. I have found it curious that I think African Americans in the South tend to demonstrate, particularly through their military enlistment, a greater love of country than our counterparts in the North. A greater sense of protectiveness of America, and I think a lot of that has to do with how much we had to fight to feel that sense of belonging. So we have a greater stake in America than do our cousins to the North.

Fred Clump speaks of the history of the South, and his place in that history during segregation. But again, unlike the white respondents, this history seems closer to him, more meaningful, something that molded his entire life experience. Further, he believes

that experiencing the history of racial oppression in the South makes southern blacks more aware and perhaps more appreciative of larger American ideals. Larry Carpenter (55, black) of Nashville echoes these remarks:

> Q: How important to you is being a southerner?
>
> A: Well it's very important because I think it's part of my identity. And, and it's part of my, my culture, and my cultural understanding, my sense of peoplehood, and my sense of who I am, uh and my ancestry are all rooted in the South.
>
> Q: Have there been times in your life when it's been more or less important to you that you are a southerner?
>
> A: No. I can't think of a time when it was less important. Maybe more important during the Civil Rights Movement, because I always thought of African Americans in the South as having a deeper consciousness regarding the need to fight for social change. I didn't see that among a lot of northerners. I didn't think, based on what I knew at that time, that they had the same level of consciousness that we had, or the determination to change the society. Because of, mostly because of what I heard, you know, about people in the North.

For Larry, being southern took on more importance during the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement. This period of time highlighted what he saw as the differences between African Americans in the North and the South. He seems to express pride in the effort of southern blacks to overcome injustices, to fight for change.

The discussions above suggest that black southerners may have a more immediate and visceral tie to the history of the South than many whites. Because they suffered, fought, and overcame racial oppression in this region, that history acts as a source of pride, unity, identity, and strength. However, it should be noted that these respondents quoted above actually experienced the time of segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. It is possible and plausible that as time moves on, new generations of black southerners may not have such an immediate tie to the history of the region[43]. Yet the

[43] Griffin (unpublished), however, notes that the Civil Rights struggle represents a memorable event in that it brought on long-term changes, made people contemplate the events as they happened, was emotionally

words of one young black woman in Nashville, Rebecca Laster (age, 23), indicate that at least some in the younger generation feel the impact of the South's racial history:

> The South has a lot of history. It's kind of odd I'm saying, I'm black, "I'm like, oh the South has history," and my people were oppressed here, but we do have history here. Even, you know, black history here. The Civil Rights Movement was here. It wasn't started in New York. It was started here, with our people. So, I think that makes me special.

Interestingly, though Rebecca thinks that the black history in the South makes her special, makes the identity important to her, note that at first she comments that it may be strange for her to say the region's history is important as a black person. She anticipates that others would find this statement odd, that southern history is not a history that blacks would claim or associate with feelings of pride, the implication being that often southern history is thought of as white history and something that resonates mostly, if not exclusively, with white people in the region.

My data indicate that blacks and whites in the South do vary to some degree in whether they see southern identity as important, with whites being more likely to view the identity as important. But the reasons both groups see the identity as important are somewhat different. While most whites and about half of black respondents place emphasis on such cultural attributes as the values, morality, religion, and lifestyle of the South, black respondents emphasize the importance of the southern history of racial struggles. In a more overt way than for whites, being southern is important to blacks because of their racial identity. Regional history, individual history, and racial history intersect, melding into a collectivizing construct and identity (Griffin, unpublished). Black history is southern history, and southern history is black history. And for my black

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charged, and exerted a "collective psychological impact." Younger cohorts not alive during the Movement still "remember" it at high rates as an important event in American history.

southern respondents, both of these histories, regional and racial, take on personal significance.

Thinking Southern

There are other indicators of the importance of southern identity for both races in my data. For example, I asked people when they thought about being southern. I wanted to know if this was an identity that southerners thought about on a daily basis, or something that only came to mind occasionally, perhaps not having a great deal of relevance or importance for everyday life. Both black and white respondents gave similar answers to this question. They thought about being southern when they were in other regions, when people commented on their accent, when they ate certain foods (e.g. fried chicken, collard greens, grits, gumbo, livermush, etc.) or watched certain movies set in the South. However, there is one striking difference that did stand out. Out of 25 white southerners who answered this question, no respondents said that they never think about being southern, while out of 21 black southerners who answered this question, eight (38.1%) asserted that they never think about being southern[44]. Three African American respondents said that they had never thought about being southern until this interview (though these respondents did identify themselves as southern when asked). Here is Katrina Carson of Marion (26, black):

> Q: Is it something you've thought about [being southern] often, or more so now in the context of this interview, otherwise do you think about it often?

[44] These finding are consistent with Southern Focus Poll data from the spring and fall of 1992, which showed that, before the poll, 24.2% of black southern residents had given almost no thought to being southern, compared to 15.2% of white residents. Conversely, 39% of white residents of the South stated they had thought about the South "quite a lot," compared to 33.2% of black residents.

> A: Not really, except for like in this interview. You know when you had called me I was trying to think of stuff about being in the South. I never really even thought about it. I guess I'll think about it a lot more now after this interview (laughing).
>
> Q: Have there been any times when you do think of yourself as a southerner? Like can you think of any events that tend to happen that trigger that thought in your mind, that I'm from the South?
>
> A: Um, no not really.

Also Teresa West (Marion, 69, black):

> Q: Are there any times when you tend to think of yourself as a southerner, or is it something that doesn't really occur to you very often?
>
> A: I don't think it really does. Now that I'm doing this interview it might (laughing). I might think that, "well, I'm southern," you know.

This finding offers some indication that southern identity might not be very salient or important for some of my black respondents, or alternatively, that their racial identity may be so important that it overrides any thoughts of their regional identity. These inferences are bolstered by the uncertainty that some black respondents had when claiming a southern identity. As discussed in Chapter 3, seven out of 30 African Americans who were born and raised in the South (or 23.3%) were initially uncertain as to whether they were southern. All seven eventually concluded that they were indeed southern.

Whites, on the other hand, seemed to be more accustomed to thinking in terms of region -- not a single white respondent questioned whether they were southern, even those who rejected the identity – and were more likely to claim the identity with certainty. I believe this notion of claiming the identity with certainty suggests that for whites the southern identity is more of a conscious part of their thinking, an identity that they are familiar relating to (or rejecting, in the case of the one white respondent who rejected the identity for political reasons).

Other findings discussed in previous chapters seem to indicate that black southerners may not see the identity as very important in their lives, at least not in comparison to their racial identity. In Chapter 4, I noted that black southerners were less likely than white southerners to feel bothered by negative views of the South, perhaps suggesting a lack of investment in their regional identity. I also noted there that though most blacks and whites stated that they had never experienced discrimination based on their regional identity, several black respondents volunteered that they had felt discriminated against because of their race. These data from the last chapter, along with the findings discussed above, provide evidence that black southerners may place more importance on their racial identity, with less importance, and for some none at all, on their regional identity. Thus, the intersection of racial and regional identities needs to be examined further.

Racial and Regional Identities

Racial Consciousness

When directly asked about their racial identity, black and white respondents differed in the importance and awareness they attributed to their race. The overwhelming majority of black respondents, 24 out of 27 (88.9%), said that their race is an important part of who they are. In contrast, roughly half of white respondents, 13 out of 28 who were asked (46.4%), said that their race is important[45]. From these numbers it is quite

[45] These results are quite consistent with the Southern Focus Poll data on racial consciousness from 2001, which were presented in Chapter 1. Using the mean scores of a three-item index measuring racial consciousness, black residents of the South showed substantially higher levels of racial consciousness than whites in the region.

obvious that the black respondents in my sample placed more importance on their racial identity than whites. However, the way in which respondents articulated this importance gives added weight to these numbers. Black respondents generally spoke of the importance of their race more emphatically. Race was important to them because of their lived experience as a minority group in which they are constantly made aware of their race. As Griffin (unpublished) points out, this shared experience of discrimination and struggle has acted to collectivize blacks' racial identity, bonding African Americans together. The following are a few comments of black respondents concerning the question of racial importance:

Darren Winters (Baton Rouge, 39, black):

> Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?
>
> A: Yeah because I'm black, so I guess it is.
>
> Q: Is it something you are very aware of in your day to day interactions with other people?
>
> A: (sigh) Yeah, I guess because everybody look down on a black person, so yeah. To be honest with you, every race do, so. But like I said, I don't get caught up in that black and white issue.[46]

Nick Godfrey (Marion, 53, black):

> Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?
>
> A: Oh God yes, mum-hum.

Fred Clump (Nashville, 58, black):

> Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?
>
> A: Is my race, oh absolutely!
>
> Q: Is it something you are aware of in your day to day interactions?

[46] Throughout our interview Darren said that he "didn't get caught up in that black and white issue." In other words, he did not get involved in racial issues. However, his responses to questions frequently came back to race, and he was clearly bitter and angry about the experiences of prejudice and discrimination that he has gone through in his life.

A: You've never been black, have you? No, if you'd been black you wouldn't ask no silly-ass question like that. Next question.

Donna Levert (Nashville, 49, black):

Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?

A: Yes. I'm very aware in my day to day interaction. I've often told people that I don't think there is a day that goes by that I'm not forced to think in some way or fashion about, you know, what it means to be an African American. So it's very much a part of my thinking on a day to day basis, o.k. Some people don't have to think that way. I think they don't have to get up in the morning and think, "Well I'm this, or I'm that," but I think if you're African American you do. What you say, how you look at someone, how you approach certain issues are shaped to some extent by the realities of race.

And Brian Winfree (Nashville, 21, black):

Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?

A: Yeah. Of course, because I know there are certain things I don't do as a black male. As a black male I don't drive retarded. I don't look for a reason to be pulled over by the police. I don't look suspicious. I always carry I.D… I mean there's just certain things that black people just don't do because, just black people don't do it for the most part. I can't explain them all. It's kind of like a cultural thing that's ingrained.

These excerpts demonstrate a high degree of racial self-awareness articulated by black respondents. It is very clear that their racial identity is important to them, primarily because they are made aware of their race every day. It is a constant, lived experience. When directly asked if they think about their race on a daily basis, blacks were much more likely than whites to respond affirmatively. Seventeen out of 26 African Americans who responded to this question (65.4%) stated that they were aware of their race on a daily basis. In sharp contrast, only 2 out of 29 whites who responded (6.9%) stated that they were aware of their race on a daily basis. Clearly race plays a very different role in the lives of whites and blacks in my sample, and this difference likely affects how they understand their regional identity.

Though roughly half of my white respondents asserted that their race was an important part of their identity, whites articulated this awareness in a more abstract and

distant manner. Whites did not think of their race daily and were not made aware of their race during social interactions to the same extent as black respondents (for more on this, see also Roediger 1991, Frankenberg 1997). The following are some examples of how white respondents spoke of the importance of their race:

William Lancaster (Marion, 46, white):

> Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?
>
> A: Mum, I'm sure. Huh. Yes I guess it is, yeah. I'm not sure that any decisions I've made I'd of made any different if I was black or…so I don't know.
>
> Q: Do you think about or are you aware of your race in day to day interactions?
>
> A: Not really. Not really.

Sally Polito (Nashville, 22, white):

> Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?
>
> A: I think it's important, like important as, I know that's how I'm perceived as, you know, like so… and that's how like, it's important like… since people see me, you know since I'm white, people see me as white. I know I get treated differently, so… I mean I don't think it's important for me to be white, but I know I get treated differently because I am.
>
> Q: Are you very aware of your race in day to day interactions?
>
> A: No.

Michael Roberts (Nashville, 55, white):

> Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?
>
> A: It seems like one for deeper thought, but I'd have to say I guess.
>
> Q: And is it something that you're very aware of in your day to day interactions?
>
> A: I probably take it for granted, but when I get time to think about, take time, get time, whatever, I guess I'm, feel like I've been very fortunate maybe compared to some other folks.

And Kate Thomisee (Nashville, 26, white):

> Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?

A: I'm sure it is in ways that I don't know, you know. Um, but not really… In some way it is, but it's not something I think about all the time, you know.

Q: So is it something that you're aware of in your day to day interactions, your race?

A: It depends on the situation I'm in, you know. I am, like when I go in to a Vietnamese restaurant, I'm aware that I'm white, or American more than white. But uh, usually only when I'm in a situation where I'm… you know, when I'm around white people I don't think about it. When I'm not around white people I think about it more.

From these examples it is clear that whites place far less importance on their racial identity than African American respondents. Even those whites who say that their race is an important part of their identity, such as the respondents quoted above, seem uncertain or less emphatic about the role that their own race plays in their life. Respondents like Sally Polito, Michael Roberts, and Kate Thomisee believe that their race has probably affected who they are, probably afforded them more opportunities in life compared to other racial groups, but they are not really concretely aware of the ways in which their race has operated in their own lives. Their racial identity seems abstract, taken for granted, less present in their lived experience. Kate Thomisee states that she only thinks about her race in situations where she is a minority; otherwise, her own race does not enter her thinking. A few other white respondents brought up this same phenomenon. It seems that for whites, their own race is seldom part of their consciousness, unless they are in a situation where they are a racial minority (and these situations do not seem to come about very often). Leslie McSwain (21, white) of Marion:

Q: Are you very aware of your race in your day to day interactions?

A: No, well whenever I, I had to go to Baltimore once. I was aware then (laughing), but other than that…

Q: What made you aware of it?

A: We got lost in Baltimore, me and my mom. And we were, it seemed at the time, now this was years ago, at the time, it seemed like we were the only whites in that whole place (laughing). I don't know how it happened. And, in Baltimore, the blacks there are

> different from the ones here, just like the whites are different. I told you they're, they're not as considerate to people. I think [they are] rude. I felt uncomfortable.

Overall, whites, when compared to African Americans, seemed less comfortable and familiar talking about their own racial identities. For example, Kay Pearce (Baton Rouge, 74, white) "admits" that her race is an important part of her identity in almost a confessional manner:

> Q: Is your race a very important part of who you are?
>
> A: I'd say so. You mean being white?
>
> Q: Yes.
>
> A: Yes, honestly yes it is.
>
> Q: Why is it important, in what way?
>
> A: I never thought about that. I don't know. I can't answer that.

At first Kay seems uncertain about answering the question of her racial importance, clarifying that by race was I speaking about her being white. Using the term "honestly" in her response seems to imply that declaring her race as important is something that may be frowned upon, something that perhaps should not be disclosed. Finally, her lack of familiarity with thinking in terms of race is further expressed by her uncertainty as to why her race is an important part of her identity.

Linda Dobbs (age, 43), a white woman from Marion, also appears to be uncomfortable with thinking in terms of her race:

> Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?
>
> A: No. I don't think so.
>
> Q: Are you very aware of your race in your day to day interactions with people?
>
> A: Not necessarily. You know I don't find myself sitting here talking to you thinking, "Wow, I'm white." That's kind of ugly. But, no I don't think that factors in to how I present myself to people.

> Q: Just out of curiosity, to think of yourself as white, what makes that a negative sentiment?
>
> A: Well I think when I put a label like that on it I'm somehow establishing something that is unequal, something that makes us different, and I don't necessarily define my differences from you by my appearance. You know I, that's just not, that's just not what I think. You know I see other people as other people. I'm a person, and you're a person, and we are talking, that's just not part of what I think about.

Note that Linda Dobbs describes thinking of herself as white as "ugly," something that creates a sense of difference and inequality. White respondents may be hesitant to say that they are race-conscious or proud of their race for fear of being perceived as racist[47]. When Leslie McSwain (21), also of Marion, talks of being white, she also brings up feelings of racial inequality:

> Q: Is there a particular race or ethnicity that you identify yourself as?
>
> A: (pause) I'm just a white female.
>
> Q: Is your race an important part of who you are?
>
> A: It is. Um, like I said whenever I feel ashamed it's over the whole slavery thing, but then also it's just, just like it is to everybody else, to an African American or anybody, race is always going to be, um… I guess mainly for my family history wise, but it wouldn't make any difference if my family, as long as I could… it's not necessarily race though, I guess, now that I'm thinking about it. Now look what you did, you got me thinking (laughing). I want to be able to identify myself with my family, and if they were, say my dad if he were African American and my mom was Caucasian, you know, I would feel the same way. I think I would. And it just turned out that I happened to be white, so. It's important to me I guess to identify with my family.

Leslie starts by saying her race is important, but then immediately mentions a negative aspect of being white, focusing on how whites have oppressed blacks in America. As she thinks through her connection to race, she concludes that her race is not that important. Her family heritage is more important. Again there is a sense that identifying as white is "bad," or "shameful," as she points out.

Finally, note the discomfort experienced by Betty Hilgurt (Nashville, 43), when she admits that her racial identity (as white) is more important to her than being southern:

> Q: Is your race more important or is being southern more important to you?
>
> A: Ooooh. Race or southern. (pause) Hum, that's a good one. I guess race, if I had to pick one [she is speaking in almost a whisper now]. I don't like to think, well (pause). I guess I'll leave it at that. That feels kind of funny, but, I'll leave it at that.

Betty comments that she feels "funny" asserting that her race is more important, and declines to speak further as to why her race is more important. When I asked this question in the interview, her discomfort was quite palpable, demonstrated through her long pauses and whispered response (even though no one else was in her house at the time).

For many white respondents, talking about their race was not only strange and unfamiliar, the very notion that they had a race seemed to be something about which they were not really consciously aware. Because whites make up the majority population in the United States, it has been argued that whites do not really "see" their own race (Kolchin 2002). Being white is normative in our culture. This way of thinking about race was fairly common for my white respondents. For example, note how Linda Dobbs, above, declares herself as "just white." Being white, being part of what is normative in American society, has little flair, is invisible, is taken for granted. Listen to the words of Sue Rivet (Baton Rouge, 45):

> Q: Do you identify yourself as white? Is there any other race or ethnicity you identify yourself as?
>
> A: No, just as white.
>
> Q: Caucasian?

---

[47] Though I do not have enough data concerning how white southerners think about their race, I think this hypothesis could be tested by conducting more pointed interviews with whites focusing on how they feel about their race. See conclusions for more on this.

A: Yes.

Q: Is being Caucasian an important part of who you are, or is it something that you don't think about too much?

A: I, not really, no. I never really thought about it, because it really was never, it's never brought up really, you know.

Sue is "just white." She does not identify herself with any other ethnic or racial group, such as Italian or Irish or Scottish. And as she states, she has never really thought about her own race. This is a subject that never comes up. Similarly, Lisa Harrison (41) of Nashville speaks of being white:

Q: What race or ethnicity do you define yourself as?

A: White, Caucasian. I mean I don't have much else. I have dark hair and dark eyes. There must be some Italian or Greek or something there, and I wish I knew what it was, because I would embrace it. But I can't. So I don't know where it all comes from, but we are dark and um, I wish I could embrace it, but I don't know what it is.

Lisa does not have knowledge of her ethnic ancestry, so she states that she doesn't "have much else." One gets the sense that for Lisa being white is a fallback identity, something that she claims because she doesn't know about her heritage. Being white feels like an identity of last resort, while she wishes she had other (white) ethnic identities to claim. Amanda Coble (30) of Marion also expresses this desire to claim other ethnicities:

Q: Is there a particular race or ethnicity you identify yourself as?

A: Yeah I guess I don't get to claim anything but Caucasian (laughing).

Q: Is being Caucasian an important part of who you are?

A: I don't, no I don't think so.

Like Lisa, Amanda is relegated to being "just white," an identity that is not really important to her. The following are other examples of how whites expressed their racial identity in these normative terms:

Dennis Godin (Baton Rouge, 65):

> Q: Is there a particular race or ethnicity that you identify yourself as?
>
> A: White. Just white. Caucasian, but that's white.

Betty Richardson (Marion, 48):

> Q: Is there a particular race or ethnicity that you identify yourself as?
>
> A: Well white, but you know, just, you know it's just always been kind of a given. You never think about those things.

Jennifer Dartmouth (Nashville, 54):

> Q: What race or ethnicity do you identify yourself as?
>
> A: Hum, what race do I identify myself with? I don't think about it, but I'm white. So I guess I'm, check the Caucasian box.

And Mike Watson (Nashville, 37):

> Q: Is there a particular race you identify yourself as?
>
> A: Well, just that I'm a white guy. I identify myself with being a white guy.
>
> Q: Do you identify with anything else, like Italian or Irish, or is it primarily white?
>
> A: No, just a white guy.

By asserting that their race is something they never think about, it is just "given", or by describing themselves as "just white," respondents declare themselves as part of the majority, normative racial group in America, but also seem to be expressing a lack of a "real" racial or ethnic identity. Being white is not really unique, interesting, or noteworthy. It is as if this race doesn't really count, is not really a race at all. One might say it is the default race, when you can't claim anything else.

Which is more Important: Race or Region?

White southerners may place more emphasis on the importance of their regional identity because they do not, on the whole, have a strong sense of a racial identity. A simple cross-tabulation of the importance of white respondents' regional identity and racial identity is consistent this conclusion (Appendix A, Table 9). 61.5% of self-described white southerners who say that their racial identity is not important to them assert that their regional identity is important (N=13), compared to 50% of whites who say that both their racial and regional identities are important (N=10). One should of course keep in mind that this sample is very small and not representative, but nonetheless we have some indication that whites are a bit more likely to value their regional identity when they do not see their racial identity as very important. We see, too, that black southerners whose racial identities are important are more than twice as likely to say their regional identities are unimportant (68.2%) versus saying their regional identity is important (31.8%)(Appendix A, Table 10)[48]. Only two African Americans indicated their racial identities to be unimportant, both of whom put real import on their regional identities as southerners.

Three white respondents included their southernness when asked about their racial identity. Brent Jacobs (age, 57) of Nashville:

Q: What race do you identify as?

A: Me? A white person I guess.

Q: Do you think of yourself as Italian or Irish or anything beyond…?

[48] Southern Focus Poll data show that that there is no correlation between African American's racial consciousness and their regional identification (r = .020). This is somewhat inconsistent with my conclusion that the high racial consciousness of African Americans dampens their regional identification. The racial consciousness of whites is moderately correlated with southern identification (r = .175). For southern whites, having a strong regional identity is related to having higher racial consciousness, suggesting that racial and regional identities are more closely related for whites.

A: No, no. I think of myself as a southern American.

Paul Madison (from Marion and a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, 48):

Q: Is there a particular race or ethnicity that you identify yourself as?

A: (laughing very loudly) Yeah, I consider myself a Confederate Southern American.

Q: As your ethnicity?

A: Yep, and that's the way I'll fill it out on any, on any form. Not Caucasian. Click on "other," and "Confederate Southern American."

And Steven Campbell (Marion, 41):

Q: What race do you identify yourself as?

A: White.

Q: Do you tend to think of yourself as Italian or Irish or Native American or anything like that, or do you tend to think more of yourself as white?

A: Just born southern, Caucasian boy.

These white respondents seem to view their southernness as a part of their racial/ethnic identity[49]. No black respondents claimed to be a "southern black" person or a "southern African American" when asked this question. This observation leads us closer to my original question, how do racial and regional identities interact in the case of the South?

I asked respondents if their race was more important to them or if being southern was more important. Black respondents were much more likely than white respondents to assert that their racial identity was more important to them than their regional identity. Out of 23 self-identified black southerners who answered this question, sixteen (69.6%) said that their racial identity was more important. In contrast, only seven out of 27 white

[49] Two other white respondents in Baton Rouge included "Cajun" as part of their ethnicity, in addition to claiming to be white. This indicates that some whites merge this southern subculture with their racial identity. One black respondent claimed "Creole" as part of his ethnicity. Though definitions vary, In South Louisiana, the term "Cajun" is generally associated with whites of French ancestry, while "Creole" is

southerners (25.9%) said that their racial identity as white was more important than being southern. A few black respondents commented on why their race is more important:

Fred Clump (Nashville, 58):

> Q: Is your race more important to you or being southern?
>
> A: No my race is more important than being southern. Absolutely. Like my race is more important than being a Republican or Democrat, or anything.

Tyler Sanders (Nashville, 54):

> Q: Is your race more important to you, or being southern?
>
> A: I would say race. As I say I don't really identify, except the fact that I am southern by birth and by experience. But I don't see that as being any specific thing that actually defines me. It's just a fact that I'm a southerner. Whereas race is something that is defining in that that has been what has determined my experience, and the experience I continue to have is based on my race. Not necessarily my being a southerner. Because if I'm black, and I'm from the North, I will be treated the same way as a black southerner. So I mean it's not the fact that I'm southern, but it's the fact of race that has shaped and determined the kinds of experiences, exposure, and treatment that I've received. Whereas being southern has not really had anything to do with that. I haven't seen that I was treated differently because I was just a southerner. That wasn't it.

Differences between black and white respondents are even more clear when looking at those who asserted that being southern was more important. Eleven out of 27 white southerners (40.7%) said that their regional identity was more important than their racial identity[50]. In sharp contrast, not a single black respondent said that being southern was more important than being African American. Often white respondents who placed more importance on their regional identity said that they never thought about their race, or tried not to think about other people in terms of race. The following are a few examples:

Greg Coppage (Baton Rouge, 51):

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associated with blacks (or people who are racially mixed) of French ancestry (for more on this, see Henry and Bankston 1998, 2002).

[50] The remaining seven black respondents and nine white respondents said their racial and regional identities were equally important.

Q: Is your race more important to you or being southern, or are they about the same?

A: I would have to say, I guess if I've got to pick it would have to be just being southern. That's a good question. I never thought about that, about, thinking about like I'm a white guy. I don't think about that (laughing), do you know what I'm saying? It don't cross my mind. I'm glad you asked that. It gets me to thinking too.

Patty Simpson (Baton Rouge, 24):

Q: Is your race more important to you, or being southern?

A: Being southern.

Q: Why is that?

A: I knew you were going to ask me that (laughing). I try not to think of people as one race or the other. I try not, I try really, really hard not to do that, to see people as people, and where they are from, not people as in, "oh that's a black person. That's a white person. That's a Hispanic person," more like, "That's a person from south Louisiana. That's a person from California," you know, or, "That's a person from Latin America, or that's…," you know, not so much as a race, … as the history, the heritage, the person as a whole, not just that one aspect of a person. If that makes any sense[51].

Linda Dobbs (Marion, 43):

Q: Is your race more important to you or being southern, or can you make that distinction?

A: (long pause)… I think southern would be more important, because I think the qualities that I initially described as things that I'm proud of, that I am, that are generally associated with the South, those aren't qualities that are associated with race. They're qualities that I think are associated with the South. So do I associate myself more with the South or with my race? I associate myself more with the South.

Q: And are there any times when you tend to think of yourself in terms of your race?

A: When I have to check a box [in a questionnaire].

Q: Any other times? Is it mainly when you are taking a survey, or when I am asking you, like now?

A: No, no. It's just not something I think about a lot. And maybe it's fortunate that I haven't had to think about that a lot.

And Jennifer Dartmouth (Nashville, 54):

Q: Is your race more important to you, or being southern?

[51] Patty Simpson talks of trying hard not to think about race. She told me this can be difficult in her work environment. Patty works at a pet store, where the mostly white employees regularly make disparaging remarks about their predominantly black clientele.

A: (laughing) Being southern.

Q: When do you tend to think of yourself in terms of your race?

A: Um, gosh, when I check a questionnaire (laughing).

As we have seen before, it is quite evident from these responses that whites do not tend to think about their racial identity, and even those who do certainly do not do so to the same extent as black respondents. Because these white respondents seldom really think about their racial identity, their regional identity takes on more prominence. Conversely, African Americans, who place much more emphasis and importance on their racial identity – a consequence in large part to the emphasis the larger culture places on being black -- do not see their regional identity as more important than their race[52].

Finally, roughly a third of both black and white respondents said that they place about equal importance on both their racial and regional identities (7 out of 23 black respondents and 9 out of 27 white respondents). Six out of the nine white respondents said that neither their racial nor regional identities were very important to them. This makes sense: if neither identity is very important, conflict or competition between the two would be unlikely. No black respondents made this claim, again emphasizing that all blacks placed at least some importance on their racial identity (and in this case regional as well), while whites were more likely to say their race was not very important.

The Intersection of Race and Region

So what can we conclude from these findings? How do race and regional identities interact in the South? It seems clear black respondents were more likely to see

their racial identity as an important part of who they are, compared to whites. Whites do not seem very accustomed to even thinking about their own racial identity, or at least to admitting such thoughts to others. This circumstance may make it easier for whites to identify with their regional identity.

In addition, there is some evidence that whites somehow feel uncomfortable thinking about their race. Recall Linda Dobbs' comment that thinking of herself as white seemed "ugly," or Betty Hilgurt, who felt "funny" talking about her whiteness. Because of this, whites may use their regional identity as a means to indirectly express their racial identity. As noted, some respondents included being southern as part of their racial/ethnic identity. Also, as I pointed out in Chapter 4, at times there was a tendency for both black and white respondents to imply, either implicitly or explicitly, that southerners are white. Lisa Harrison (41), a white woman from Nashville, talks about how outsiders view southerners:

> Q: Do you think they over-all have a positive view or negative view of the South, people from outside [the South]?
>
> A: I think it's positive, generally, although I think they don't respect it much, if those two things can go along. I think we lost a lot of respect for our treatment of the race relations… And I think we've been our own worst enemy by espousing our views of discrimination and consequently being thought of that way, which is true. So I think if you go off spouting about how you feel about discrimination it's pretty much, you sink your own ship. So I think we're responsible for it ourselves, actually.

When Lisa talks about how "we" espoused our views about discrimination and how "we" dealt with race relations, she is really talking about white southerners who have discriminated against black southerners. So she implies that southerners are white people, and the racism of these people has resulted in negative views of the region.

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[52] Recall also from Table 10 that 62.5% of black southerners who say that their racial identity is important to them also state that their regional identity is not very important.

Similarly, Jennifer Dartmouth (54), a white woman from Nashville, speaks about the Civil War:

> Q: What do you believe the Civil War was about?
>
> A: Oh, it was about us having the, the South wanted to be their own decision-maker. They didn't want the North telling them what to do. And if they had slavery, it was just part of our economy, but then it just became about our right to be who we were, and our rights as states… but it was, slavery was intertwined, that was the major issue, and we just felt like we needed to make those decisions on our own terms.

Again, when Jennifer talks about "the South," and what "we" wanted, she is referring to white southerners. Black southerners did not have the right to make decisions about their own enslavement. They were not the decision-makers who would benefit from states' rights. These white respondents lapsed in to a pattern of using the term "we" to describe the actions of white southerners; thus, "white southerners" becomes interchangeable with the term "southerners" in their speech. The following passage demonstrates this tendency for white respondents to slip in to this pattern. Patty Simpson (24), a white woman from Baton Rouge:

> Q: When you think about the Civil War, what do you feel it was about?
>
> A: I don't think it was what a lot of people think it was, just strictly about abolition, abolishing slavery and stuff like that. I think that had a big thing to do with it, but I don't think that was the main cause about the Civil War, because white southern people wanted to keep slaves and the rest of the country didn't want them to do that. I don't think it was all that. I think it was a part of it. I don't think it was as big a part as some people claim it to be. Because when you ask some people, "What do you think about the Civil War," or "What was the Civil War about," "Oh, it was white people versus black people." No, which was not the case, you know. I think it might have been a lot to do with the pride of the southern people, wanting to be their own, independent southern place, maybe. I don't know. I wasn't there.

One can clearly see how Patty begins by talking specifically about "white southern people." She may have been using this terminology because I used this phrasing throughout the interview. However, by the end of her response, she states that the Civil War "might have been a lot to do with the pride of the southern people, wanting to be

their own, independent southern place." Here she has quickly moved in to using the word "southern" to describe the actions of white southerners. Black southerners were not exercising their pride and desire to be independent during the Civil War. They were still in bondage.

I came across several examples of white southerners implying that their regional identity was also an identity associated with whites. As discussed in chapter 4, some white respondents would mention that southerners are racist, or that outsiders think that southerners are racist, again implying that southerners are white. Brent Jacobs (57, white) of Nashville talks about race relations in the South:

> Southerners have an unusual relationship with the blacks. And it must be a great relationship, because it seems like blacks are predominately in the South. If Yankees treated them better they would be going up North (laughing), but they're staying here. And the few that I do know just can't wait to get back to the South, so. I think that says something, and makes you wonder why, you know, northerners fought for them but there really is few northerners… I do know quite a few northerners, and they are all extremely uncomfortable around blacks. I mean it's just ironic, you know. Oh yeah, they're quick to make comments about the way we treat blacks and so forth, but they don't have any black people in their community. I mean it's just ironic the way they talk about it, and you know, they really don't know any of them, but they just, I mean it's really strange. But amazingly enough they want their children going to school with them (laughing). It's just, it's the height of hypocrisy in a lot of ways.

Brent's use of language suggests that both southerners and northerners are white, and these groups are different from blacks, who seem to have no regional identity in his eyes, only racial.

White respondents were not the only ones to equate southernness with whiteness. Several black respondents also implied this racial/regional connection. Harry Stanford (age, 57), a black man from Marion, talks about southerners:

> I guess, one of the things I guess I think about is the difficulty that traditional southerners have with the Martin Luther King holiday and things associated with him, and they still resent that fact that you know it's a holiday. That's why I said I'm somewhere in the middle when you asked me if I was a liberal or a conservative. I flip sometimes in my positions on things like that because it bothers me, it bothers me that we honor folk like

> Robert E. Lee, Jeb Stuart, other Confederate slave owners, because they were, because of what they represented. And at times it bothers me that the traditions surrounding them pop up. But at the same time, if I want them to respect King, I know I need to respect them.

"Traditional southerners," – by which he quite clearly means white southerners -- do not approve of a holiday honoring Martin Luther King, even though Confederate soldiers and slave owners are honored. Though Harry Stanford identifies as southern, and thinks that blacks can be southern, he also falls into the pattern of speaking about southerners, or at least particular southerners, as white.

Nick Godfrey (age, 53), a black man from Marion, directly talked about the racial/regional connection to whiteness. He told me that he was not proud to be southern because of the history of racial oppression in the region, which he experienced growing up. We then had the following exchange:

> Q: [Your response to the previous question] just made me think. When you think of the term southerner, and this might sound like an odd question, but does, do you associate southerner sometimes more with whites?
>
> A: Yes.
>
> Q: O.K., cause I was wondering if that's why, when you say you're not necessarily proud to be a southerner, is that kind of because it's associated with an idea of white history or white people more so?
>
> A: Exactly. Exactly. So yeah I think that uh, because like I said until I went into the military and interacted with people from all over the United States, it didn't come up, whether southerner or northerner or westerner or anything like that. And that's where you hear it more of is through white southerners. You know, their southern heritage, their history, and proud to be a southerner and so forth. That's usually, so yeah I associate more with, you know, your race, on how you feel about being proud as a southerner. You know I myself personally have been a black male, and I don't, I don't consider myself a southerner, I consider myself an American who happens to live in the South. So I associate more the term southerner with the Old South. And the Old South wasn't worth a damn. Does that answer it?

Even though Nick initially claimed to be southern at the beginning of our interview, he later rejected that identity, explicitly linking being southern with being white and thus, also, with the history of racial oppression.

The blending of racial and regional identities for whites may allow white southerners a means to express their racial identity through their regional identity. The implication is not that all whites are southern, but all southerners are white. Therefore, one can express whiteness through southernness if being southern is linked to being white, even if perhaps unconsciously. By being southern, white southerners can express an identity that is unique in the larger American context, allowing them to feel special, while also being able to freely express their whiteness, an identity that they feel uncomfortable even acknowledging, much less publicly expressing.

It seems that for some whites their race is expressed as region, while for blacks their regional identity is expressed in terms of their racial identity. Curtis Slocum (25), a black man from Nashville, discussed the relationship of African Americans to the South:

> Well, let me go back here on history. If it's a black person, you are always, even if they're living in the North, if you're black period, if you're a person of color, African American, you will always be from the South. O.K., you will always come from the South. Well actually come from Africa, then you know come from the South, but you will never be, as far as your blood, your bloodline will never be truly a northerner, a westerner, an easterner, or whatever. You will always be, you know, a person from the South, as far as your bloodline is concerned.

Curtis argues that all African Americans have roots in the South and are in this sense southerners. All black people have links to southern culture. His statement is reminiscent of the discussion in Chapter 3, where I pointed out that many black respondents had difficulty distinguishing what was black from what was southern. "Soul food" is considered food that African Americans eat all over the country, but it is also southern food. Southern history, particularly the history of racial oppression, slavery, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights, is not thought of by black southerners as black southern history, but rather black history. Aspects of black culture that might be rooted in the South are still attributed or thought of as part of one's racial culture, not one's southern culture. So

for these southerners, what is southern is subsumed by what is black. Regional identity is subsumed by racial identity.

I do not mean to suggest that black southerners do not think about their southern identity. Many expressed a deep connection to the South and a love of the region. However, I do think it is clear that black respondents felt that their racial identity was more important than their regional identity, and that, in general, as white southerners are less familiar thinking about their own race, black southerners are less familiar thinking about their regional identity.

One last point should be made in terms of this discussion of the intersection of racial and regional identities. Further examination, using in-depth interviews, is needed to examine why whites do not seem to think about their own race and seem uncomfortable talking about their race. It seems peculiar that members of the dominant racial group in American culture would want to deflect attention away from their own racial identity. Are whites ashamed of being white? Do they feel guilty about racial injustices of the past? As I will discuss in the following section, it does not seem that most white southerners feel guilty about the South's past, though they may admit that racial oppression was wrong. I would suggest that whites may hide or downplay their racial identity because it allows them to deny that they are privileged in our social structure. If you do not see your own race you cannot see your own racial privilege. These are only conjectures, but they may offer a fruitful area for future research.

Remembering the Past - Southern Identity as Morality

A discussion of how black and white southerners perceive and relate to their regional identity would not be complete without dealing with southern history and how these groups think about the past. After all, how we remember the past has implications for how we view ourselves and others (Zalizer 1996). So do white and black southerners remember the same southern history? Are their interpretations of the past similar? And how might these interpretations affect their sense of regional identification. It is to these questions that we now turn.

In the confines of this study I cannot deal with the many aspects of southern history that my respondents discussed, which included their thoughts on the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movements, slavery, segregation, historic memorials, and "southern" symbols. Instead, I will discuss those recollections of southern history that specifically shed light on how individuals apprehend their regional and racial identities, beginning with the how white southerners view the past.

Many historians, literary analysts, and sociologists of the South have discussed the problems that white southerners (often termed simply "southerners") encounter when dealing with the past (Woodward 1960; Tindall 1976; Hobson 1983; Cobb 1999b; Wilson 1999; Forts 2002; Reed 2002). White southerners have to come to terms with a past mired by racial oppression, white supremacy, slavery, segregation, and violence. Southern history is seen as a burden (Woodward 1960), a history that evokes feelings of shame and guilt that "identity challenged white southerners" must confront (Cobb 1999b). This line of reasoning begs the question, do white southerners indeed feel guilty about the past? How do white southerners deal with this guilt?

White Southern Guilt

I asked respondents if any feelings came to mind when they reflected on southern history, feelings such as pride, anger, guilt, or shame. Out of 22 southern whites who answered this question[53], a sizable minority, seven (31.8%), responded that they felt some guilt or shame when thinking about the region's past. Of these seven, six respondents felt guilty about the racial oppression that African Americans suffered in the region, while one respondent felt some shame about how Native Americans were treated. The following are some reactions from those self-described white southerners who feel guilty about the past:

Amanda Coble (Marion, 30, white):

> Q: Do you associate any feelings with that history, like pride or guilt or anger or shame or anything?
>
> A: Oh absolutely. I think there's a lot of guilt in the South about the Civil War. And I hope, I believe and I hope that there's a lot of guilt about what people did in the face of the Civil Rights Movement, what white people did in the face of the Civil Rights Movement.

Linda Dobbs (Marion, 43, white):

> Q: When you think about the history of the South, what tends to come to your mind?
>
> A: All the racism stuff.
>
> Q: And do you have any feelings about that history as far as…?
>
> A: I feel embarrassed that it required that amount of effort that it did. I feel embarrassed when I think about all of the intolerance, and it's something that I don't want to be associated with.

And Michael Roberts (Nashville, 55, white):

> Q: Have you ever felt any guilt or shame about the history of the South in any way?
>
> A: Oh I mean I've seen some things that are pretty abhorring. Um, well not only race I guess, sometimes, I mean maybe some of the, prior to the, I mean some of the problems

[53] Eight southern whites were not asked this questions either because of the time constraints of the interview, or because they had difficulty understanding the questions (generally due to advanced age).

> in Appalachia and some of the other things that are a bit, what was the question… , shameful.

These statements of white southern guilt, however, were the exception rather than the rule. When asked about whether they felt guilt over the South's past, a few white respondents explained why they did not feel guilty.

Patty Simpson (Baton Rouge, 24):

> I don't, I don't feel I should be guilty about it [the Civil War, specifically] because I didn't do it, and my immediate family didn't do it. I'm not shamed by it because like I said it wasn't my problem. I didn't do, I didn't have anything to do with it. It was way, way before my time.

Ted Jefferson (Nashville, 53):

> Q: Do you have any feelings that you associate with the history of the South?
>
> A: I think it's, uh, the slavery issue bothers me. I wish that they hadn't done that, but I think many of us have had ancestors who were all involved in slavery. Uh, but it was like many things, they just did what their forefathers had done, and I wish we could go back and change all that, but we can't.
>
> Q: Do you feel any sense of guilt or shame over that part of southern history?
>
> A: No. I mean I don't like it. I don't think it's good, but how…I didn't do it. So no, no shame no guilt. I didn't, you know…

Both Patty and Ted reject the notion that they should feel guilty because they had no personal hand in the racial oppression during the times of slavery. Denying personal involvement can protect one from being associated with an ugly past. Greg Coppage and Mark Hobbes use a different technique to explain why they feel no guilt about the past.

Greg Coppage (Baton Rouge, 51, white):

> It was just a different time back then [during slavery and the Civil War], and it's not that way anymore. You know it just don't ever need to be like that again. It was just the, it was all about money and commerce, anyway… You know times have changed. You know I can see why they, why the South needed slaves and this and that and the other, because they had to get in the crop. They had to, because the North wanted the stuff, you know it was… and it's like, they're the side [the South] that gets picked on about having the slaves, but it was all about commerce and meeting the markets needs, and that's the only way they had to do it back then. You know so, as far as I'm concerned everybody was guilty of that injustice, both sides, you know.

Mark Hobbes (Marion, 38, white):

> Q: When you think about the South's history, do you associate any feelings with it, like pride, guilt, or anger or shame or anything like that?
>
> A: Pride. I'm very proud. Like I said, the South did not invent slavery. There was slavery in the North. And the worst race riots that ever occurred were in New York City, the draft riots. That happened I think in 1863, the New York Draft Riots. Have you ever seen the movie Gangs of New York?
>
> Q: Yes.
>
> A: It depicts that. I mean there were blacks lynched from the street lights in New York City. And it, and it was because of the draft. New Yorkers did not want to go to war to fight, to end slavery. They rioted over it, killed people, burned homes. That, you know people don't talk about that, but it happened.

Both Greg and Mark minimize the South's complicity in slavery and racial oppression by pointing to the inequities that existed in the North. In effect, white southerners should not feel especially guilty about slavery, because northerners were just as racist.

For my white respondents, with the exception of the seven respondents who admitted some shame concerning the South's past, it does not seem that southern history is truly a "burden" that they must work through or overcome. But perhaps answers to this one question do not tell the whole story. White southerners might not feel guilty about southern history because they reinterpret the past, at least to some degree, in order to fit their own needs for a positive group identity. We begin to see this process in Greg and Mark's responses above, as they seek to lay blame on the North for racial atrocities, therefore downplaying southern history as exceptional in its racial violence. Read also the comments of Lisa Harrison (41, white) from Nashville, who while asserting that she feels guilt about the South's past, also tries to put a positive spin on the situation:

> Yes, I associate guilt with the Civil War, but I associate much more guilt with the treatment of African Americans during that time and since then. I think it was, I think more African Americans were in worse shape after they were free than before. And I may be wrong, but I have in my mindset that there were enough decent plantation owners

> that, though they were working hard, at least their needs were met. They were fed and they were clothed. I think when, right after the war when they were free in the South, with no means of anything must have been horrible. It is no wonder everybody wanted to go North, you don't have anybody in the South that's going to help you. So I associate a lot of guilt with that, you know, after the Civil War… there wasn't anybody, money wasn't worth nothing, there was no way to help anybody. So, um, that was a horrible thing.

Lisa seems to admit guilt over the Civil War and the system of slavery, but expresses even more regret over how newly freed African Americans were left adrift and unprotected after the Civil War. She is trying to understand white southerners of the time as benevolent caregivers to slaves, who met their needs during slavery, even if the slaves were required to work hard. Using this paternalistic framework seems to help protect white southerners from the being vilified and held culpable for the institution of slavery. This technique probably also protects Lisa, who has deep family roots in the region, from feeling ashamed of her heritage and ancestors.

New Polish on a Tarnished Image: Techniques of Minimization

In his insightful book, *Racism Without Racists*, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) discusses how whites in America use racial story lines to express ideologies and collective understandings of race. These story lines are often used to support the dominant position of whites and to "justify and defend current racial arrangements." In a similar vein, many white southerners, like Lisa above, use what I call "techniques of minimization" when talking about the South's past. These techniques are ways to soften the image of the racial injustices that occurred in the South, to reinterpret the past and portray white southerners in a more positive light, and/or to downplay negative aspects of the South's history of white supremacy. These are mechanisms that allow white southerners to feel some pride in their white southern heritage, even while the vast

majority do admit that slavery and segregation were wrong. My interviews suggest that there are several techniques of minimization commonly used by white southerners to explain different parts of southern history: 1) the systems of racial oppression were not that bad, 2) white southerners protected and helped black southerners, 3) Africans sold their own people in to slavery/we didn't invent slavery, 4) the Civil War was an honorable cause, as were the soldiers who fought, and 5) the past is over, let's just move on.

Racial oppression was not that bad - The thirteen white respondents who used this technique generally asserted that while racial oppression was not just, and everyone should be equal, racial oppression in the South was not as bad as people often think. This technique was used to minimize the oppression that occurred in several different eras of the South's history, including the time of slavery, segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement. Mark Hobbes[54]* (38, white) of Marion talks about slavery in the mountains of North Carolina:

> My father's homeplace that I told you about, it was a plantation. They did own slaves. I'm not proud of that, but I'm not ashamed of it either. I recognize that slavery was a fact of life in those days. People, it was a system, a way of, it was a institution that they had inherited from their ancestors. .. A lot of the plantations and slave owners here in the mountains, they had smaller operations than the quote "big cotton plantations" and sugar cane plantations that they had in other parts of the South. I think there were some slave-owners here in the mountains. They had a few slaves. They had like one person to work in the house, another person to work in the fields, and sometimes I think you had the owner working alongside with the slave. In some ways they were like hired hands on a farm. They weren't hired, but they kind of acted in that capacity[55].

In this passage Mark equates slaves to "hired hands," except "they weren't hired." This is an interesting, odd contradiction. But he seems to be trying to assert that slaves were

[54] An asterisk will be used in this section to denote respondents who told me that they were members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, a southern heritage group with a particular interest in the history of the Confederacy.

not treated that bad and in fact often worked alongside their owners. They were all part of a "team." Hobbes may have forgotten to note, or perhaps he did not know, that certain teamplayers could not leave the organization and had no input into how the game was played.

William Lancaster* (46, white), also of Marion, explains how slaves were treated well by whites:

> There's court records right here of Mr. Carson [a local slaveowner] taking and suing people for mistreating his slaves, when he would rent them out. But if you start reading about this stuff, man you got to respect the black race. They were building the roads, building the bridges. You got to respect them. At the same time, respect my heritage [as a white southerner]. Like my friend H.K. Edgerton says, you think about white history in the South, and you have to think about black history in the South, because they were a family. When the slaves got sick, it was the white women that took care of them, got them better. The black children in this area were taught to read and write, and read the bible by a school teacher at the Carson house… Not a lot of Africans knew anything about religion before they came over here. So the white folk taught them religion. And so they were side by side. Like I say, once you start reading some of the things that went on, you can't do nothing but respect the black race.

William Lancaster tries to make it clear that he respects black people. His friend, H.K. Edgerton, is a black man. He points out the role black southerners have played in the history of the region. At the same time, he minimizes or ignores the injustices and mistreatment that slaves experienced. William does not seem to acknowledge the inherent degradation of being considered "property" that could be "rented out." As evidence that slaves were not treated that badly, he talks about a local slaveowner who sued others for mistreating his slaves. However, William ignores the fact that it was in the owners economic interest that his property is not harmed. He takes a paternalistic view of slavery, portraying slave owners as caretakers of a race who needed education

[55] For more on slavery and race relations in Appalachia, see for example Billlings and Blee, 2000, and Inscoe, 2001.

and religion. Similarly, Paul Madison* (48, white) of Marion talks about how his ancestors treated their slaves:

> We had 167 slaves in the family. See for us slavery was not an institution, it was a necessity. The reason being there's no way we could have afforded to live without having it like it was. We respected our slaves, we honored our slaves.

The excerpts above offer examples of how some respondents alleviated potential guilt or stigmatization concerning the institution of slavery by asserting that slaves were well treated and respected. According to their arguments, slaves played a vital and necessary role in the growth of the South, and in exchange for this service, they were taken care of by their benevolent owners.

These techniques of minimizing racial oppression were also used by white respondents when discussing segregation. Some whites did not seem to recognize that the institution of segregation was inherently discriminatory. Brent Daniels (62, white) of Nashville:

> It was segregated, totally. In fact there were probably only one or two black families that lived in the community [of Franklin, TN], but they were respected people even though we were segregated. They were still people of pride, the black people, were people of pride. And everyone got along with them, I mean there was not, there were never, no racial problems. I mean we were segregated in the city, Franklin. There were still no, no racial problems of any kind. We had black schools; we had white schools. That's the way life was. But again, in fact there weren't any racial problems. I think, maybe, the only time that I can remember might have been in the early 60s, there was some sort of march maybe, within the black part of Franklin. I don't even know what the issue was now. Whatever it was, it couldn't of been too serious because it didn't last, it wasn't there long.

Later in the interview Brent again talks about growing up during segregation:

> There weren't large numbers of blacks in Williamson County. I'm thinking the city of Franklin might have had fewer than a 1,000 black families that lived in the Natchez area of Franklin. Out in the county there weren't, they were sparse families. But no one, I don't think in my mind, I never heard of it, never saw it, which doesn't mean it couldn't of happened, I don't know that those people were ever discriminated against. I mean they did things, I can recall, they killed hogs during the wintertime, most of the farm families killed hogs, it was a community thing. And black families were always there and they participated. Like I say, I don't think they were discriminated against.

Brent Daniels does not seem to view the system of segregation as discriminatory. In his mind, African Americans were respected in the community and both races got along. Ted Jefferson (53, white), who also grew up during segregation in Franklin, again minimizes the inequality associated with Jim Crow:

> Q: Did you have a lot of interaction with other racial groups when you were growing up?
>
> A: Well we did with some black people, yes. Some of them I went to… I knew growing up. Some of them I knew cause they worked for the family, or they worked for other families. But it was definitely a segregated society. Whites lived in one area and then maybe a street or two with black people, but then it goes back to white. So it was, there were different areas, but it was segregated.
>
> Q: And you said when you went to high school that was when it became desegregated…?
>
> A: Yes. But I went to a prep school, boys' school, and it was not, it should have been, but it wasn't. I'm sure they would have taken, but nobody applied. But the high school, the public high school was desegregated. The black high school was closed. And this was about '65.

Like Brent Daniels, Ted Jefferson seemed to downplay the problems with segregation, particularly when he talks about his prep school. Ted admitted that his private high school was still segregated after formal desegregation efforts had occurred in public schools, but attributed this to the fact that no black students applied. He did not call attention to other factors brought on by segregation that may have accounted for the lack of applications, such as black families not being able to afford private schools due to limited job opportunities and tacit understandings that they were not welcome in the private schools.

Other white respondents did not necessarily deny the inequities of segregation, but instead stated that they never saw any racial troubles. Many of these folks were more liberal in their thinking and very supportive of equality. However, their lack of

experience with "racial problems" evidences the gulf that exists between white and black memories of segregation. Linda Dobbs (43, white) of Marion:

> I was the first grade, one of the first grades that went to the other school [the formerly all black school]. And I'd never even seen it before, because it was down this tiny little street on the other side of town, and it was an interesting, an interesting situation. But I remember absolutely no problems.
>
> Q: Does it generate any feelings in you now, when you look back at that [time of segregation] and think about people's mindsets and all at the time?
>
> A: Not really, because I mean I never, I mean it wasn't a people mistreating people situation. I don't remember in my time growing up, I don't remember violence, like when these things happened elsewhere. I don't remember that at all.
>
> Q: And what were your interactions like with the students, when things were desegregated in the schools? How did the students interact?
>
> A: You know I am getting old, and I don't have any specific memories. You know I think if there had been big problems I would have remembered it.

Linda was very supportive of desegregation, but it is doubtful that her more positive views of relations between whites and blacks during segregation and its dismantling are shared by African Americans. As I will discuss later, black southerners felt the daily wounds of segregation, even if they were not involved in direct conflicts with whites. Another white respondent, Betty Richardson (age, 48) of Marion, also did not seem very aware of any racial difficulties that may have existed in her community during the time of school desegregation. She discusses racial interactions during this time:

> You know the black people hung out together, but you know, so did the Marion people and the Nebo people and the, you know, it wasn't a lot of difference there. And there was never any racial problems that I recall. There probably were that I just didn't know about, but I didn't know about them, so.
>
> Q: But on the whole there wasn't a whole lot of interaction among people of different races?
>
> A: Um, I mean no. I mean I don't think anybody really would have gotten up and moved from a table had somebody sat down, but there wasn't a lot of social interaction either.

Coming from a white perspective, Betty does not seem very aware of any racial problems that occurred during desegregation. However, she does admit that there very well may have been problems (which, as will be seen later in this chapter, were expressed by black residents of Marion that I interviewed), but these experiences were not a part of her reality.

By framing racial oppression in the South as not that bad, not so cruel, violent, or unjust as people often think, whites can have a more positive view of their racial heritage in the South and, thus, of the region that grounds that identity.

Paternalism - Another technique employed by ten whites to minimize the negative aspects of the South's past was to emphasize the close relations between white and black southerners, particularly the paternalistic care whites gave to and regard they had for blacks. Claire Kendall (74, white) of Baton Rouge talked about how white southerners treated African Americans:

> But like here, the things with the schools, integration of the schools, we accepted them better in the South than they did in Boston. You saw how they turned over buses. They just had riots. They had all kind of problems in Boston. And they [northerners] look down their nose at us, when we're probably nicer to them. We can understand them, and then we are nicer to the blacks than they are up North.

Claire Kendall seems to feel that southern whites are extending a courtesy to blacks by being nice to them, by being able to understand an inferior group. Here she not only uses a paternalistic tone to argue that southern whites treat blacks well, she also uses the technique of downplaying racial oppression in the South by pointing to racial conflict in the North, which she argues was much worse.

Several white respondents discussed relationships with black employees who were "like family." Jennifer Dartmouth (54, white) of Nashville:

> Q: Did you have much interaction with people of other races when you were growing up?
>
> A: Only as, only with help that was African American. And [I have] real strong, strong part, you know real strong images because they worked for us, but they were, seemed like members of the family. My grandfather and my grandmother both lived with us, growing up at different times, and they both, my grandfather had help who basically lived with him and looked after him. So she just seemed like a member of the family. And then other men and women who worked for us just seemed, it was this real strong family relationship because they were in our home… And we had a woman who actually, she came once a week and she ironed, that's what she did. And uh, she made the statement to me, we were all very upset, my parents were very upset about what was going on [racial conflict in Nashville of Civil Rights at the time]. And we were upset for her, because she was having to travel through an area where there was this tension and disruption and some small level of violence in terms of people throwing rocks at the blacks who were trying to garner support for their cause. And she, I'll never forget this statement for whatever reason. She said, "You know, don't you worry because those people are white trash people, and you don't need to feel guilty because you're white, because you're a good person," you know, in so many words that's what she had said, so.

Declarations of familial relations with blacks help to alleviate feelings that white southerners treated black southerners badly. As Jennifer Dartmouth says, her family worried about the help during times of racial tension in Nashville. And the lady who ironed for them told Jennifer not to feel guilty about what the white people were doing. Their good relations with their help seemed to absolve or lesson feelings of guilt about racial injustices in the South.

Lisa Harrison (41, white), also of Nashville, talks about how her parents treated their black help when she was growing up:

> Q: And do you know how your parents felt about the Civil Rights Movement at the time?
>
> A: I think they were absolutely for it and thought it was the right thing to do, but they were leading their lives… They didn't take their own time to do anything about it, though I'm sure when the vote came up they pushed the button of "everybody be equal."… The physical energy and the time taken and the financial resources that I saw being expended were for people who were in our lives in some kind of service occupation. And most of them worked for my family in some kind of full time employment situation. I remember my parents thinking it was very important to take care of them as best they could. You know they made sure that there was, I noticed that my mother was saying, "Do you have a turkey, do you have…," she wanted to make sure that everybody was eating what we were eating, although they might not be eating it off of the

> same piece of china. She wanted them to have ham at Easter and turkey at Thanksgiving. And I remember, um, things being bought. So our efforts were for those who were personally, we had personal relationships with.

According to Lisa, her parents were supportive of equal rights, but they demonstrated this support by assisting and taking care of their black employees. Though Lisa's family certainly meant well, the framing of the situation as "taking care" of their black employees implies that these employees indeed needed to be taken care of, protected, because they were somehow lesser than their white employers.

Paternalism is used to demonstrate the generosity of white southerners and the closeness of relations between blacks and whites during segregation. Whites can feel better about their racial past by articulating that past as one of benevolence and warmth shared with their fellow black southerners.

A few of my black respondents shared their thoughts on these types of paternalistic relationships during segregation. Teresa West (69, black) of Marion describes the uncertainty that could go along with depending on the help of whites:

> The [white] man that daddy worked for, that he was doing the cooking for with the hunting, he, it was just a promise, he promised daddy that he was going to give him the deed for the house where we lived, and he didn't do it.
>
> Q: Oh really, when he passed away?
>
> A: Yes. And not long after he passed away, his wife put us out. And I remember we lived in a church basement.

Clearly, being at the mercy of even paternalistic whites could be a vulnerable position for African Americans.

Larry Carpenter (55, black) of Nashville talks of what it was like to be on the receiving end of these types of paternalistic relationships with whites during segregation:

> Q: Were the interactions that you had with whites [during segregation] mostly formal, or did you have friendships with whites in that town?

> A: I would say that's part of the paradox of the situation. My parents did have friendly relations with some whites in the town [a small town in Alabama], especially the woman my mother worked for. We used to tell her all, the most personal kinds of things, you know. So I, that's what I, as I reflect on it I really can't understand. Why is it that the lady [the white employer] who told her [his mother] very personal things about marriage, about her children, that kind of thing, would have objected to her coming in to her church, felt that you know life should be segregated, that Jim Crow should stand? She really believed that, I know that. But she was very, my mother and father had friendly relations with her. And we got along with the kids up to a certain age, when we were all kids. But when they got a certain age then we weren't allowed to associate with them.

You could say that Larry's mother was "part of the family" of her white employers, and it is quite likely that her employers described the relationship as such. But nonetheless, these "family relations" were still unequal and generated feelings of confusion and mixed emotions for the black southerners in the relationship. Perhaps it was nice that they were so close with these whites, but life was still segregated. There were still boundaries that they knew not to cross. Friendly relations did not take away the pain of segregation. Gerald Tyson (65, black) of Nashville articulates this point in the following exchange:

> My associations with whites were very limited. As a boy in junior high school and high school, I worked for a family cutting the lawn. And I may mention that none of these people, these were white people, they were never mean to me. And interestingly, although I was called "nigger" many times by other people, these people for whom I worked never did that. They were very respectful and very protective in many ways.
>
> Q: How do you feel about that sense of paternalism, because I've interviewed several white southerners, particularly around Nashville, that came from old [white] families and who would talk about having different people working for them, and that sense of "they were part of our family," and things like that. How do you feel about that?
>
> A: Well I tend to, to grimace at it a bit, because, when I think of my, the women in my family, and I don't know why that is. I grimace when I think about how my sister was treated, very kindly as long as, you know, things were going well, but at times there was always that very direct kind of language, which was not necessarily mean, but it was authoritative. And I think the key point here is that there was never the free exchange and free debate within that system. Even when people were nice and told you to do something, there was never an option of debating those things. And this concerned me.

Gerald Tyson points out that relations with whites might be friendly, but they were never equal. The excerpts above demonstrate that the technique that white southerners employ of emphasizing the close relations between blacks and whites during

segregation, and the care that whites showed to blacks, may help whites deal with the past, but these recollections of the past do not necessarily ring true for black southerners.

We didn't invent slavery: The denial of culpability - Another technique of minimization used to relieve white southern guilt over the institution of slavery was to deny or lessen culpability by declaring that southerners did not invent slavery and that Africans sold their own people in to bondage. Seven of my interviewees relied on this technique, which is a fairly straightforward way to push the blame for slavery onto others outside of the region.

Brigitte Canning (65, white) of Baton Rouge:

> Well you know some black people think that we owe them everything because they were so mistreated. I like to remind them that they came to this country because they were sold into slavery by their own people in Africa. The Indians were here. So if somebody had to gripe that you owed them something, it should be the Indians, not the black.

Brent Daniels (62, white) of Nashville:

> Blacks that were sold into slavery, they were sold into their slavery by people of their, their own families did. They were brought here, sure they were. And they were in slavery here, but their own families rounded them up, put them on boats, sent them over here, and many of them died. And certainly that's not good. Slavery still happens all over the world. Slavery hadn't gone away. If you know anything about Africa and other parts of the world, I mean kids, women, and all are being sold into slavery every day of the week, and prostitution. Still going on.

Some respondents pointed out that people in other regions profited from slavery, not just the South. Claire Kendall (74, white) of Baton Rouge:

> People in Boston and Connecticut, they got their wealth from selling slaves from Africa to the South. And see I didn't realize that… they look down at our noses, that we are so bad cause we had the slaves, which my family did not have, but they had the slaves, but these states were making millions. They were making money off the slaves.

Jerry Williams (77, white) of Marion:

> From the history I've studied and read about, a lot of the southern people didn't believe in slavery. And there was as many northern people about as had slaves as there was southern people, not the average slave liked that worked farms. That's where most southern people had them to work their farms. But a lot of the northern people had slaves, according to history. Some of the Presidents had slaves. But we never, ever

> should have had slavery to start with. I think the forefathers messed up when they allowed that to come into this country, and that's bad on the South. I don't even, I don't understand why they could make a slave out of a person, but it was tradition back all through time, if you study history, that most countries had slaves. They bought people and they sold and traded just like you would the stock market or something.

Most who talk about how the South did not invent slavery or that other regions and countries have had slaves as well are quick to say that slavery was bad. Nonetheless, their comments certainly are used to try to shift some of the blame for slavery away from white southerners and on to northerners and Africans.

The Civil War was an honorable cause - The Civil War often came up in the discourse of white southerners. Many talked of the Civil War as an interesting and exciting part of southern history. Rather than seeing the Civil War as a conflict over slavery in which white southerners were on the wrong side of human justice, eighteen whites used strategies to minimize the potentially negative aspects of the Civil War. They created frameworks or rationales for the War in order to cast both the cause and its fighters in a more positive light.

One common way for white southerners to place the Civil War in a more positive light was to argue that the War was not fought over slavery; it was, instead, over states' rights. Out of 29 white southerners who talked about the cause of the Civil War, sixteen (55.2%) responded that the War was over states' rights. In sharp contrast, out of 29 black respondents who answered this question, only one single respondent (4%) said that the war was about states' rights. Moreover, fifty-three percent of black southerners said the War was over slavery, compared to 31% of white southerners[56]. In sum, white southerners were much more likely to assert that the Civil War was about states' rights

[56] This finding is not consistent with Southern Focus Polls, which show that 48.9% of whites and 47.6% of blacks say that the war was over slavery.

than black southerners, and less likely to say the War was about slavery. Here is how a few white respondents talk about the cause of the Civil War:

Lisa Harrison (41, white) of Nashville:

> I think that we still hold some pride about the effort, I guess, is the best way to put it. We can't, we can't possibly hold any pride about the outcome [the South's loss], although we should, because the outcome was the way I, in my mind, exactly the way it should have been…. Like I said before, I'm very proud of the effort that we made as southerners, that the South made, the intellectual effort that was made as we seceded.

Though it may not be clear from this passage alone, Lisa argued that the "intellectual effort," the Confederate stance that states should have the right to secede, was noble. However, she is glad that slavery ended and that the South is now part of the United States. This seemingly contradictory stance may be a way for Lisa to preserve a feeling of pride in her heritage and ancestors, as she has deep family roots in the South. Slavery was certainly wrong, but, according to Lisa, one can be proud of the intellectual effort involved in the South's effort to preserve what it perceived as the original intent of the Constitution. She believes the War was about states' rights, not slavery.

Betty Hilgurt (43, white) of Nashville:

> I believe the Civil War was about a people trying to make a living, trying to find their way, and feeling like, that the government…I, I think it was a real shake-out of what level of government involvement there was going to be in their decision-making, across the board, from state to state, you know, just how was the country going to come together under one set of laws. And I think there was a lot of balking about how that was going to happen.

And Jennifer Dartmouth (54, white) of Nashville:

> Oh, it was about us having the, the South wanted to be their own decision-maker. They didn't want the North telling them what to do and if they had slavery, it was just part of our economy, but then it just became about our right to be who we were, and our rights as states… but it was, slavery was intertwined, that was the major issue, and we just felt like we needed to make those decisions on our own terms. And it just got, we, you just can't believe all the men who went to war and died for their, they just believed it was this whole homeland thing, this was their home that they were protecting. And they thought the Yankees were taking their homes away, their whole way of life, and you know most of them didn't own slaves.

Like the other respondents quoted above, Jennifer begins talking about the Civil War as a states' rights issue, though admitting that slavery was a part of the cause as well. However, she dismisses the importance of slavery as a reason for the war when she states that most soldiers who fought did not own slaves. They were good men who were fighting for their homeland and their "way of life," which, in fact, was a life of white supremacy.

Many white respondents spoke of Confederate soldiers as honorable men who should be celebrated for fighting for a cause in which they believed. Affirming the goodness of Confederate soldiers, their bravery in battle, gives white southerners a past that they can feel proud of. Not only were these soldiers brave, but most were fighting to protect their home and family, not in support of slavery.

Michael Roberts (55, white) of Nashville:

> Q: Did you have any ancestors that you know of that fought in the War?
>
> A: Yeah, there are one or two. I don't think they were ever very decorated. One of them I think from West Tennessee is actually down and buried in the Shiloh Battlefield, down in Southwest Tennessee.
>
> Q: How do you feel about their participation?
>
> A: I feel like that they did it probably, without knowing them or discussing it, as just a call to duty, and I doubt that a lot of those folks felt like they were trying to fight a war to enslave people in an inhumane sort of way.

Anna Brown (72, white) of Marion:

> Q: Do you know if any of your ancestors fought in the war on either side?
>
> A: Yes, my great-grandfather did, but he didn't really fight. He was in the army, and he was young, and I forgot just how it was. He was ready to go to battle, and it was over just as he was ready (laughing). He didn't really fight.
>
> Q: Was that for the Confederate side or for the Union?

A: It was for the South. But I think his feelings were more northern. He was not for slavery, cause my parents, none of my grandparents either, ever had slaves, and they lived in Virginia. But my, they were merchants, so that made it different.

Betty Richardson (48, white) of Marion:

Q: And you said you had ancestors that fought in the war…

A: Yes.

Q: And for which side did they fight for?

A: The Confederate side.

Q: And how do you feel about their participation?

A: I think it was a cause that they felt like it had, there again, I think it had nothing to do with slavery because none of my family were wealthy enough to have slaves for that even to become an issue. I think it was just a states' rights issue with them.

Many white respondents claimed to have ancestors who fought for the Confederacy, (seventeen, in fact, or 58.6%) yet these respondents felt quite confident that their ancestors did not fight in support of slavery. Finally, Patty Simpson (24, white) of Baton Rouge discusses why Confederate soldiers should be memorialized:

Q: How do you feel about monuments to Confederate Veterans?

A: I don't think it's a problem, just like any war hero. Of course I guess some people are going to have a problem with it, but when it's a monument to a Civil War hero or a Confederate hero, it's for what they did in the war, not for the things like… it's like bravery under fire or whatever. It's not, "Oh they were the ones that made sure that these people got to keep their slaves," or something like that. It's not that kind of monument. It's just like the monuments that we put up now where people are, you know for people that have been in war, you know like the, the Vietnam War Wall or whatever. It's for the entire picture, not just one little thing that happened at this battle over here that might not of been good. It's not like we're praising these people that wanted to keep slavery, it's we're praising what they did for the country as a whole.

Several white respondents also pointed out that some blacks fought for the Confederacy. The participation of blacks seemed to give these respondents a way to justify the war as not being about slavery, and a way to illustrate that slaves were really

not treated that badly in the South. If they were treated so badly, why would they fight for the South?

Charles Davis* (83, white) of Baton Rouge:

> Q: What do you believe the Civil War was about?
>
> A: Probably wasn't about slavery. States' rights. That's what it was about… We know good and well why the Civil War was fought. We know. And it wasn't about slavery, because we had a lot of black people who fought for the Confederacy.

And William Lancaster* (46, white) of Marion:

> Q: How do you think black southerners can express their heritage as southerners?
>
> A: If they would learn more about what their ancestors did during the War. If he read and he found out that sure he was a slave, but the man that was his owner had taken care of him, had nursed him, fed him and fed his family and clothed his family, had provided a place for his family to live? Alright, his master goes off to war. He goes off with him. Would that change the way this black man looked at the Confederate Army or the Civil War knowing that he didn't have to do that. The first chance he could have took off and run, but he was home. His home was in the Southland. He was basically proud to be from the South, and he appreciated what was given to him by his owner by going off to war. So that also meant that this slave-owner was not hanging these slaves, beating them, so he might change the way he views the white people. And it's just education. I'm sure that bad stuff went on back then, but if you look for the good things that happened. Like I said, blacks basically built the South, the bridges, the roads. That's something you got to be proud of. A lot of them don't even realize that. They just thought they were put out in the fields and at nighttime locked up, morning put back out in the fields.

This passage is particularly important because William vocalizes the process of using minimization tactics. After describing slavery as an institution that really was not that bad, William asserts that he wants to focus on the good things about the Confederacy, the Civil War, and slavery, not the bad. William is proud of his white southern heritage, probably due to the fact that he does try to focus on the "positive" parts of southern history. By implication, William believes that African Americans should also focus on the positive – which is, as he sees it, the close bonds between slaves and their masters, along with the contribution that slaves made to the growth of the South. This tactic may seem to be a contradictory impulse, looking for the positive in the system of slavery. But

again, William wants to frame white southerners, his ancestors, as more benevolent, while portraying African American slaves as respected people who were appreciated by their owners. It seems that he wants black and whites to be able to have pride in the same past, a mythical past in which the two races got along in bonds of respect, trust, and perhaps affection.

Let's Just Move On – Avoiding the Past - The final technique of minimization, adopted by eight of my interviewees, is the desire of some white southerners to just move forward and not get bogged down in thinking about the South's past. This technique suggests at least some desire to avoid the past, to avoid thinking about, dealing with, or taking responsibility for the oppression of African Americans in the region. Some of these respondents vocalized frustration that black southerners were "dwelling on the past." These whites believed that blacks needed to stop complaining and take advantage of the opportunities they now have. Betty Hilgurt (43, white) of Nashville talks about the opportunities in the South:

> You know as twisted and as backwards as it was with how the African Americans got here, I guess the Caucasians got here by choice and they did not, they were forced over here, I just think the opportunity for living that they have, that the freedom to kind of be whatever they want to be, and the educational opportunities and everything versus living in Africa… I think it's the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Betty then goes on the assert that it is time to move on. White southerners today cannot be responsible for the past.

> You know I think the biggest shame I feel about it is when people, and I want to say it's a lot of media but it's a mindset too, that don't want to see the positive of what has come from it. They dwell on the negative, they still live in that. They expect some kind of recompense from people who didn't have anything to do with it. I mean we are just who we are, I mean we're living here, we didn't participate in any of that. Now sure our ancestors, some of our ancestors may have, but they made their choices based on what they chose. I mean we don't, we're not making those choices. And just the opportunities that we have in this country. I don't want to brush it under the rug because I understand the horror and the mindset that can dwell from generation to generation, that can be, um, demeaning, but I just think it's time to just move on and just, you know, go grab your

> piece of the American pie. It's out there. Let's just move on, you know. Just don't spend so much time beating each other up over what we can't do anything about.

Betty understands that what white southerners did in the past was wrong, but she does not seem to think these actions have much bearing on the future. She is essentially asserting that because things are equal now, we need to let the past go.

Brent Daniels (Nashville, 62, white) expresses a similar frustration over black southerners who focus on the past injustices; however, his feelings come across as more hostile. He thinks black southerners complain too much and expect special privileges because of past oppression, oppression that he was not responsible for.

> I'm not responsible for slavery. I don't think anyone today is. That's history. I have a very strong feeling about people that cry all the time about missed opportunities and, "I don't have an opportunity" and "continuously provide economic opportunities for me." That's not what America's about. America's about opportunity. So I think if you want a better way of life, do like everyone else. You work hard and you apply yourself. But if you gonna go around with two chips on your shoulder all the time, you're not gonna be successful. I mean you're wasting time. I see that and I hate that. I'm very firm about that, and if that's a conservative viewpoint, that's mine. I mean I saw it in the last election. I mean God almighty, I mean that's all the blacks want to talk about is "we're discriminated against." Well, are you? I think of the opportunities out there, and I don't know why they don't utilize those opportunities more and better. I don't understand that. Whenever you have an Al Sharpton, that certainly continues to stir the racial issue. Why play the racial cards all the time? Why do that? That's my question. And when you go back to Florida and say, "you know I'm arriving here back at the scene of the crime," well that's nothing but B.S. in my opinion.

Brent Daniels expression of frustration may be unusually strong, but this was not an uncommon sentiment. The following are a few other examples:

Jerry Williams (77, white) of Marion:

> I think it was a bad thing [slavery]. But I can't see compensating four or five generations after that. I don't see that, because those people are not here that done that. And black people this day and time have the same privileges I have, if they use it.

Chris Barclay (33, white) of Baton Rouge expresses his thoughts on the Civil Rights Movement:

> The Civil Rights Movement? I don't… from what I've seen on TV, I don't, I'm not a huge history buff, but uh… I mean do I think equality was necessary? Yes, I do. Do I

> think that African Americans got the raw end of the deal for a long time? Yeah, they did. And it happened down here. So I guess you could say I think it was important. I'm glad it happened. And now I think everybody's equal, and the best, let the best person succeed, you know.

These respondents all admit that the past was bad, but they seem to want to acknowledge this fact, then quickly move on. There is no need to discuss the negative things of the past, because the South is no longer that way. As Chris Barclay says, we are all equal now, and, if that is true, then no one deserves any "special" favors. In their eyes, yesterday's discrimination has very little bearing on life chances today.

Techniques of minimization were used by most white southerners. Out of a total of 30 self-claimed white southerners in the sample, twenty-four (80%) used one or more of these techniques when talking about the South's past. Roughly half of all white southerners (14 out of 30, or 46.7%) used two or more techniques of minimization.

It appears to me that these techniques of minimization serve important identity functions for white southerners. By viewing the past in a more positive light, by portraying white southerners and their actions as "not that bad," they do not need to feel guilt or shame about the actions of their ancestors. Instead, they can focus on the positive aspects of white southern heritage, and feel pride in their own connection to the region. So the answer to our initial question, how can white southerners embrace a past mired by racial oppression, seems rather simple. If the past is problematic, revise it.

The Other Side of Racial Oppression: Black Southerners' Memories of the Past

The data already presented indicate that southern identity is not as important to black southerners as it is to whites. In part, this is probably due to the fact that black southerners place more emphasis on their racial identity, which has more consequences

for them in everyday life. But other factors may also be at play, including recollections of southern history by black southerners. So how has the history of the South affected how black southerners go about identifying with their race and region? What I learned from my interviews cannot unequivocally answer this question, but it certainly points to some possible explanations.

It is possible that black southerners do not place as much importance on their southern identity because much of southern history involves memories and events that are painful for African Americans. So it is possible that while some black southerners see the racial struggles and achievements that occurred in the South as a reason to take pride in their regional identity, others may reject their regional identity because of the same struggles. These painful memories may override other aspects of southern culture that black southerners might relate to more positively, such as an appreciation of the food, celebrations, and culture that was discussed in the previous chapters. Here are the voices of black southern respondents reflecting on the past.

Joseph Freedom (88, black) of Marion:

> Well, if you want to know the facts, it may be hard to say it. The lady, I can show you her picture in there, she was just the sweetest, I never know nothing but her for my mother. She grew up just right after slave time, but her mother was a slave. And her father, he had it so bad until he was chopping a tree, and he just killed his self. Because what had happened, her mother had to birth a white kid, had to birth a kid by the slave master, you see? And then they put him over yonder in the field to hoe cotton or whatever, and then they'd take her over to the other side of the field and do what he wanted to her. He'd send her down there to milk, you know? And she told me some things that'd make tears come in your eye. But that was what Master John does when he wanted to to his, to his slaves. That's the reason, well (chuckling), you wanted to hear the truth, didn't you? Why you think her skin is so light [referring to his wife]? Do you know who she is? That's one of John Turner's offsprings. You know where the Turner house is out here? You see! Well they come here from Ireland. He had slaves up there on that thing. He had a woman he got his younguns by. White man, you see? And that's one of his offsprings. That's the reason she's white. You see?

This is a far different perspective compared to the white respondents who spoke of how well slave-owners took care of their slaves.

Nick Godfrey (53, black) of Marion:

> Looking back I mean on U.S. history in the South, if I had to explain it… You know you start talking about some of the things that you witnessed, some of the things that you had to deal with kind of growing up in the South in the late '50s and early '60s. I know I would think that that's a black mark, as far as things you want to be proud of. No I would not be proud of anything that happened. Am I proud to be a southerner? I would just say you know I'm proud to be an American. Am I proud to be a southerner based on what the South stands for or what it stood for… what it used to stand for? No I'm not. The way it is now, it's a lot better… The history that I'm used to, that I grew up witnessing, was not good. Would I want my kids to experience it, hell no. Would I want them to know about it, oh yes. But proud of what the South used to stand for, and in some instances still do, no I'm not proud of it. Did that answer it?

Again, you can feel Nick Godfrey's pain and bitterness about segregation. Here is another passage that sharply contrasts white respondents who downplayed racial oppression in the South. This comes from a 39 year old man in Baton Rouge who did not directly experience de jure segregation, but certainly has experienced racial discrimination during his life in the South. Darren Winters (39, black) reflects on the days of segregation:

> Q: When you think about the South's history, what tends to come to your mind?
>
> A: Prejudice. To be honest with you. Hon, the world is old. In 1960, they didn't want a black person, in the '60s they didn't want a black person to go to school. As old as this world is! Christ has been here, and after death and all that. Yeah it's, it's sad to be honest with you. We all bleed the same color. I don't know why one man or one woman should think they are more than the next. But like I said, I don't get caught up in it, you know. I really don't.
>
> Q: Do you have any thoughts about the Civil Rights Movement, as far as, things that happened then?
>
> A: (pause) (sigh) It's sad, that's all.
>
> Q: What strikes you as sad about it?
>
> A: How we had to fight to go to school, hon [he seems agitated and frustrated with my questions], to learn. If you don't go to school to learn, how you going to make it in life?... But like I say, I don't get involved up in that because ain't nothing I could do. I

> couldn't change the history of the South, or the history of the world. So I just try to, don't think about it, and just move on and live in this time and era.

Darren repeatedly denies that he cares about racial issues, saying, as I noted earlier, he "doesn't get caught up in all that." However, he is obviously very bitter about the past. He told me numerous stories about the discrimination that he encountered at work, and the discrimination that his young daughters now experience. The past is so painful for him that he chooses to try not to think about it.

Some spoke of the impact that early experiences with racism had on themselves or others. Isabel Connors (age, 40) told me about her troubles as a young girl in Baton Rouge:

> When I was in first grade, this little girl's mom wouldn't let her play with me because I was black… She played with me one day. The next day she came back, and her mother had told her, she's sorry she couldn't be my friend anymore because I was black. And then I became real shy and reserved. I'm not as shy as I used to be, but I was very, very shy and very reserved. I remember, I'm not trying to sound conceited, but I was intelligent, and because I had a black teacher, they assumed that this teacher was giving me the grades that I was making. So they took me and put, when I was in second grade, this white lady, she was, Ms. Vaughn, I'll never forget. She was one of the meanest teachers they had at the school. She was one of the main ones that really kicked the issue that I couldn't be, because of my color, I could not be as intelligent as I was. And they put me in her class. So I prevailed being in her class (laughing). And at that point they realized, well this girl really is intelligent.

Isabel and I talked about her shyness and lack of self-esteem. She believes her problems started when that white mother would not let her child play with Isabel. Today she lives with her grandparents, taking care of them in their old age. But I wondered what she might have accomplished if her confidence had not been so damaged[57].

These few passages demonstrate the different perceptions of black and white southerners concerning the extent and gravity of racial oppression in the South. For

[57] This early encounter with racism, and its damaging effects, is strikingly similar to Anne Moody's (1968) experience with racism as a child, when she realized that she had to sit in the balcony of a movie theater because she was black.

many black southerners, the past was painful, depressing. Rather than being a romantic place with an exciting and interesting history, a land of grand old plantations and honorable soldiers, the southern past, the Old South, is a place that they are glad no longer exists. So it is quite possible that the pain of the black experience in the South is a factor that makes southern identification less important to blacks in the region.

It should be said that though the southern past was seen as painful for many respondents, black southerners were also proud of their own efforts or those of their predecessors in overcoming racial oppression. The South and southern history represent hard fought struggles, suffering, and overcoming. Shonda Murphy (57, black) of Baton Rouge was an active participant in the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi:

> Why would I say that I'm proud of it [being southern]? Because I think that being uh reared in the South, I've had to, I've overcome some things. I've had to deal with issues that other people chose to run from. You know a lot of people left the South because they did not want to deal with the issues of racism, or things not quite being equal.

Note here that Shonda is particularly proud of her black *southern* heritage. She is proud because from her perspective those African Americans who stayed in the South, who did not migrate to the North in search of better opportunities, directly faced and overcame much of the racial oppression. When asked specifically if they were proud to be southern, several black respondents spoke of the pride they feel thinking back on their history in the region. Larry Carpenter of Nashville (55, black):

> Q: When you think of being proud of being a southerner, what specifically do you think about?
>
> A: Improvements, in terms of equality of opportunity. You don't have the white and colored signs anymore. You don't have the segregated lunch counters that I used to go to when I was a kid and a teenager. So I'm very proud of the strides that we have made as southerners.

Rebecca Laster of Nashville (23, black):

> Q: Are you proud of being a southerner?

> A: I'd say I'm more proud of being a black southerner, because like I said, times got hard down here and the industrial revolution hit and everybody ran up North to get jobs. But my family, we stayed down here, we toughed it out. You know, these people up North think oh they're so cool, now everybody's grandmamma's from South Carolina or Mississippi. Ya'll just left. And the Civil Rights Movement started down here, and those laws changed the whole country. But where did it start? Down here. So I'm real proud of being a black southerner.

Again, here we see a black woman who speaks of her specific pride in being a black southerner. This pride is based on the achievements of African Americans in the region.

A few black respondents feared that black southern youth were no longer familiar with their history in the region. I asked Nakita Blackwell (49, black) of Nashville about how she thought black southerners could celebrate their heritage as southerners.

> They can do it with respect. I think some of our younger African Americans probably need to, you know, go back and look at some of the Civil Rights issues that our forefathers were fighting for, you know to, not to take things for granted that they have. I mean like they have an opportunity. Try to make sure you fulfill the opportunity that's out there for you, and some of them I feel may not being doing that.

Larry Carpenter (55, black), a teacher in Nashville, also believes that the younger generation is losing touch with its history.

> I would like to see us give more attention to the lessons we can learn from the Civil Rights Movement, and how we can employ those lessons today as we move forward to continue to change society, to purge it of racism, because that still needs to be done. I don't see enough pastors in churches teaching our kids the lessons of the movement. And that bothers me a whole lot… I encounter it all the time in the classroom situation, where students simply don't know what happened. And I wonder where did we fail, because those of us who participated are still around, many of us. So why haven't we gotten those lessons to them? I think it's because we have done a poor job of making that kind of history available to them.

It is possible that Larry Carpenter and Nakita Blackwell are correct; the black youth of today do not know much about their history. However, even if they are not aware of the details of the history, many black southerners who did not themselves experience Jim Crow, segregation, or the Civil Rights Movement expressed gratitude to

those who came before them and paved the way toward equality. George Nickleson, (22, black) of Marion talks about the movement:

> I feel that at the time it was a real great thing. It was tragic that it had to happen the way it did, but a lot of steps were taken, vast improvements, you know, just so I could be sitting here today talking to you about it. So I think that it was a good thing that it happened, but just tragic that it happened the way it did.

Curtis Slocum of Nashville (25, black):

> The Civil Rights Movement was a good cause… Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, I'm glad that they went through that struggle for me… Muhammad Ali has went through those things. Not only him, some other older black actors, black athletes, has went through those, that time and that process, to grant me the, and lawmakers too, Thurgood Marshall… those people that have been through that struggle and brought me, gave me the right to do this, the right to have this, of being American period. I view them with most grace and respect for that.

And Wanda Burgess, also of Nashville (28, black):

> I was glad that it [the Civil Rights Movement] did take place. I hate that some of the things that took place, as far as the negative consequences and people getting killed, especially African Americans, but at the same time there were many white people getting killed trying to help us also you know, so…it had it's good points and it had it's bad points, but at the same time it helped us get to where we are today, because if we didn't have the Civil Rights Movement and people, black and white, men and women, doing what they could to advocate for us, I don't think we would be in the position that we're in. You know, we have come a long way, even though we still have things to change. We've come a long way. With the separation of the schools and all that, we've come a long way.

Even though there is much pain that black southerners associate with southern history, as all these passages indicate, many black southerners feel pride in the struggle that African Americans and their advocates waged in the South to attain equal rights. Overall we are left with a somewhat ambiguous picture concerning how the recollections that black southerner have of the past affects their identification as southerners. As discussed earlier, black southerners did not feel that their southern identity was as important as whites, and they generally saw their racial identity as more important than their regional identity.

It is plausible that the pain associated with southern history leads black southerners to disassociate from their region, because as Nick Godfrey said, "The history… that I grew up witnessing, was not good." That past was not good. On the other hand, triumphs over slavery and Jim Crow laws may lead others to have pride in their identity as black southerners, who stayed in the region and fought for justice. Though a few specifically said that they were proud to be black southerners, when many talked about their pride in the Civil Rights Struggle it is unclear if their pride in this struggle is the same as feeling regional pride due to that history. In other words, it is often not clear whether black respondents are expressing regional pride (i.e. – I am proud to be southern because of what we have all overcome, both black and white), a combination of regional and racial pride (i.e. – I am proud to be a black southerner), or if they are expressing racial pride (I am proud to be black).

One black respondent expressed the link between black history and southern history. Gerald Tyson (65, black) of Nashville stated that, "When you talk about black history you begin with the South." This statement seems to subsume black southern history within black history more generally. So one would assume that this way of reflecting on the past would place racial identity ahead of regional affiliation. Nick Godfrey makes a more direct statement concerning this issue:

> Q: If you look at things like the Civil Rights Movement and the struggles and the successes in that, is that something that makes you proud to be a southerner, or does that make you proud to be a black person in America?
>
> A: I'm proud to be a black person.
>
> Q: O.K., so it's really not centered in the southernness…?
>
> A: No, no it's not. To see the accomplishments of, and the struggle, you know when you watch the history… when you see the negative things in that, you know you see the slaves getting beat. You see how they were put in the ships and brought over, and you

> see them turn the fire hoses on some of your protesters, and things like that, no that's a negative for you. You don't feel proud of that. But when you see the accomplishments, what the Civil Rights Movement brought on, some of the positive things that the black people in the South, whether they slaves or free, some of the bounds that they crossed over, and some of the things, yes, you're very proud of that. And I would say it would make me prouder, proud as a black person to see that, as saying, "well they from the South, and I'm proud as a southerner." No. So it would, it would go more on the lines of the black.

For Nick Godrey, southern history clearly means more to him as a black person, based on his racial experience, rather than being part of his regional identity. Unfortunately, this line of interviewing was not a part of my interview guide. Again, this is an issue that should be pursued in future work. Future research should explore this question more directly than my interview questions allowed. Sorting out this issue will provide more information in terms of how black southerners' perceptions of history affect their regional identification.

In sum, it seems fairly clear that white southerners can feel pride when reflecting on southern history by using techniques of minimization, allowing them to feel good about their regional identification and thereby helping to avoid stigma. Because most whites do not tend to think about themselves in terms of their racial identity, this regional identity takes on more importance than it does for African Americans. It is less clear that black southerners feel pride about the southern past as southerners. Instead, they may feel more pride concerning how southern history reflects and relates to their racial identity, which is considered on the whole as more important than their regional affiliation.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

In this dissertation, I have used data from 65 in-depth interviews with black and white residents of the South to explore southern identity as an ethnic or quasi-ethnic identity, a stigmatized identity, and a racialized identity. This study contributes to both the fields of southern studies and social identity theory. My work enriches the literature within southern studies by aiding in our understanding of how contemporary white and black southerners understand and relate to their regional identity. In addition, this dissertation contributes to the area of social identity theory, particularly by underscoring the role and importance of understanding group history, or rather the perceptions of a group's history, both for social identity formation and the relationship between stigma and identity claims. Below I briefly discuss the major findings of my study, as well as avenues for future research suggested by my work.

The Ethnic Analogy

One purpose of this dissertation was to examine if Reed's (1982) argument that southern identification is similar to an ethnic identity for the region's residents still seems plausible 20 years later. Further, because Reed primarily studied white southerners, I wanted to see if black southerners also see the identity in ethnic terms. Based on my data, the answers to these questions are complex and in some ways complicate Reed's ethnic analogy.

My data do reveal that southerners, both black and white, appear to base their regional identity claims largely on birth in the region, family ancestry in the South, and life-long residence in the South. Further, this long term residence in the South socializes southerners into a culture that they see as distinct from other regions of the United States, and that is tied to a geographical place. For southerners, this culture is "practiced" by cooking and eating southern foods, participating in "southern" holidays such as Mardi Gras and Decoration Day, and embracing values they associate with the South, such as courtesy, a deep appreciation of family, and a slower pace of life. It does appear that being southern is quite similar to being "ethnic" in the sense of ancestry, heritage, and culture.

Other data, however, complicate the picture. Though black southerners in my study claimed their identity based on residential history in the region and a feeling of shared culture, it is quite clear that being southern is not as important to them as is their racial identity. The racial identity as black, and attachment to African American culture, seem to lessen the importance of regional identification. This is highlighted by the fact that many respondents had difficulty distinguishing what was "black" from what was "southern." The two identities blended together in a sense, but on the whole "blackness" appeared to subsume southernness. This conclusion is bolstered by the ambiguity that some African Americans expressed when asked if they were southern. Several black respondents were initially unsure about their southernness, while whites were quite certain whether they were or were not southern. Therefore this regional identity seems more relevant and familiar to whites in the region than blacks. Based on these findings, it appears that the ethnic analogy works better for white southerners.

But the ethnic analogy is further complicated by issues of migration and transmission of southernness from one generation to the next. Many respondents, though tying their own identity to birth in the region, felt that those who move to the South from other areas can adapt to the culture, learn about the region, and become southern. This ability to "become southern" by simply moving to the region, within one generation, is quite different than our general idea of ethnicity. For example, most of us would not think that we could move to Ireland and become Irish, or move to Germany and become German, at least not in a cultural sense, nor within one generation. Looking at it from another direction, some evidence from my interviews suggest that the children of southern parents who leave the South do not identify themselves as southern. In other words, if being southern is an ethnicity, it certainly seems to fade away quickly after one migrates to another region. Would this happen as quickly for Italians, Germans, or Latinos? Of course, this point should not be overstated. One would need to conduct interviews with southern migrants in the North to draw firm conclusions. Evidence directly from my interviews show that southern parents do not explicitly "teach" their children about southern ways, and that most southerners are not too concerned about passing on a southern identity to their children.

Southern Identity as Stigmatized

Another purpose of this dissertation was to explore the notion that southern identity is a stigmatized identity. So many scholars of the region have discussed the negative images of the South, one wonders why southerners would want to claim this identity. Certainly this embracement of an identity stigmatized in the eyes of many

would seem to go against the tenents of social identity theory, as explicated by Tajfel and Turner (1986).

My data indicate that overall southerners, both black and white, have a positive view of their regional identity. When asked about what traits they associated with southerners, the vast majority of my southern respondents began by listing positive traits, such as the friendly people, the slow pace of life, an appreciation of family, and pleasant manners. Generally any negative traits were mentioned after citing positive traits, and many respondents only mentioned negative traits when prompted.

Though southerners see themselves in a positive light, most of my respondents believed that outsiders, or non-southerners, did not have such rosy views of the region and its people. Both blacks and whites were quick to list a number of negative traits that they believed non-southerners associated with the region, such as believing southerners are stupid, slow-witted, backwards, and resistant to change. Black southerners, however, were less bothered by negative views of the region, further suggesting that they are less invested in this identity than white southerners.

Most southerners believed their group is perceived in a negative light, yet few mention ever experiencing discrimination based on their regional affiliation. This may be due to the fact that these respondents all currently live in the South and therefore do not encounter non-southerners as often. When southerners encounter the latter, non-southerners are on "southern ground," so they may be less likely to act in a discriminatory or condescending manner. When asked about experiences of regional discrimination, African American respondents sometimes noted that they had never experienced regional discrimination, but had experienced racial discrimination, again

offering evidence that for black southerners their racial identity is more salient and important in American culture than their regional identity.

Interpreting these data through the lens of social identity theory, I find that southerners are willing to claim a "stigmatized" identity because they view their group in a positive light. My respondents do not accept or validate the negative views that they perceive outsiders to hold. Southerners themselves tend to assert their own identity based on ascriptive characteristics, such as birth and ancestry in the region, even if allowing more flexibility in the identity claims of migrants to the region. The ascriptive quality of the identity, for my respondents, makes claims of southernness less of a matter of choice and more of a taken for granted fact. As such, they are not "choosing" to identify with a stigmatized group; rather, they feel naturally compelled to claim the identity, especially as it is seen by most southerners in overwhelmingly positive ways.

Southern Identity as a Racialized Identity

Perhaps the most important purpose of this dissertation was to incorporate African Americans centrally into the study of southern identity. I wished to understand how black southerners perceived their regional identity in comparison to whites. Specifically, I was interested in the meaning and importance of "southernness" for each group, how racial and regional identities intersect in the South, and how recollections of the past affect the identity claims of these racial groups.

As noted above, my data indicate that regional identification is more important to white southerners than black southerners. Black southerners were more likely to say that being southern was not very important to them and that they did not think about being

southern very often. Most whites and about half of the black respondents who did assert that their southern identity was important spoke of their appreciation of southern culture and values. However, my black interviewees differed in that many also spoke about the racial struggles and triumphs of African Americans in the South as a reason why being southern was important to them. While my black respondents appeared to have a more visceral, concrete, and often painful relationship to southern history, many white southerners seemed to perceive southern history as a hobby, an "interesting" heritage.

Black southerners were much more likely to assert that their racial identity was important to them, that they thought about their race on a daily basis, and that their racial identity was more important than their regional identity. In contrast, white southerners seemed less familiar and more uncomfortable discussing their own race, thought about their race less often, and were more invested in their southernness. For whites, regional identity may be a way to express a racial identity that is difficult for them to acknowledge. Examples throughout the interviews in which both blacks and whites indicated that they equated, either explicitly or implicitly, whiteness with southernness offer some evidence that for white southerners their racial and regional identities are deeply intertwined.

History, and the way respondents interpreted southern history, is very important in terms of how each racial group related to their regional identity. As noted, for some African Americans the struggles that blacks faced in the South strengthened their sense of regionalism. However for others, such as Nick Godfrey, who you may recall spoke of his hatred of the Old South, the Jim Crow South, this painful history weakened their ties to their regional identity.

White southerners had a different relationship to the past. Most whites readily agreed that the oppression of African Americans during slavery and Jim Crow was wrong. Nonetheless, many respondents used various "techniques of minimization," outlined in Chapter 5, to moderate or soften the negative images of southern whites. These techniques appear to help white southerners cope with the past, lessen guilt over racial oppression, and place their social group in a more favorable light.

Implications

By incorporating black southerners into my study, this dissertation contributes to the field of southern studies. Though scholars have begun to discuss how African Americans relate to their regional identity (see for example Ayers 1996; Cobb 1999b; Wilson 1999; and Griffin et al. 2005), up to this point very little data have existed about how black southerners apprehend their southernness. My data indicate that Reed's ethnic analogy does not fit black southerners as well as it fits whites. Being black in America is a racial ethnic identity far more important than one's regional identity, with far more real consequences. It does not seem that southernness serves the same ethnic functions for African Americans as for whites.

For whites, being southern does seem to serve many functions of an ethnicity, as suggested by Reed (1982). Being southern gives whites in the region a unique cultural identity, distinct from the rest of the nation. Of course we have seen that black southerners also share this southern culture, but it does not appear that this culture is as central to black southerners. This "ethnicity," however, appears to be mostly symbolic in nature, consistent with the ideas of Gans (1979) and Waters (1990), allowing those who

claim it to enjoy cultural distinction and membership into an imagined community, without suffering too many costs, such as discriminatory treatment. One does not have to invest too much of the self into one's southern identity, as evidenced by the sense of indifference about passing this identity on to further generations. As Waters (1990) comments, this type of symbolic ethnicity does not have much of an influence on a person's life unless she or he wants it to, and, even then, only selectively.

This does not mean that the southern identity has no relevance for whites. My findings also contribute to whiteness studies. For most of my white respondents, discussing their own race seemed unusual and at times uncomfortable. When asked about their race, several respondents stated that they were "just white," emphasizing the normative quality of whiteness that has been discussed by such scholars as Roediger (1991) and Frankenberg (1997). My data suggest that this normative perception of whiteness in American culture may make southern identity more important for my white respondents, allowing them to be unique and different, rather than simply white. This may explain why whites are more invested in their southern identity, and more invested in making that identity positive through techniques of minimization, than African American respondents. As traditional white ethnic identities in America (such as Irish, Italian, German, etc.) become muted through the generations, it is possible that regional place identities in America may become even more salient for whites, fulfilling these needs for cultural distinctiveness.

My study also emphasizes the importance of incorporating group perceptions of their history into social identity studies. For my white respondents, altering the meaning and interpretation of past events is a form of "identity work" (Snow and Anderson 1987),

by which they can feel more positive about their ancestry and heritage in the region. On the other hand, some black southerners, drawing from the same history, do not soften the image of racial turmoil of the past caused by white southerners. Instead, they draw pride from this painful struggle that binds them to the region, but probably more importantly to their racial identity. Again we see that the South can mean many things for many different individuals and groups. We need to remember that social groups are not only "emplaced" in a geographical area that affects their identities (Gieryn 2000), but that these groups and places also carry a history, often mutable, that are used to help social groups understand and see themselves in a positive light, as Tajfel (1978) suggested.

Some have suggested that the shared culture of the South, the quasi-ethnic nature of this place identity, may be able to bring different races, particularly whites and blacks, together (Egerton 1987; Latshaw forthcoming). Southern identity might be a group identity that crosses racial lines. It is true that my black and white interviewees shared many similar traits and appreciated many of the same values that they considered southern. However, it is not clear that being southern brings blacks and whites in the region together. We all love to embrace an identity that we can enjoy, a symbolic identity with a unique culture, foods, and shared traditions. But in the South, beneath these enjoyable customs, there is a history of racial oppression and violence. The South cannot be divorced from this history. It appears that blacks and whites in the region often have different conceptions of this history. For black southerners, that history is still alive, relevant, painful, and also triumphant. I do not think white southerners feel this history in the same way, and I certainly do not think whites in the region understand the moral weight of that history.

There is a rift here, a gulf between white and black remembrances of the events in the southern past. I do not believe this gulf can be overcome until everyday white and black people in the South talk about what happened, try to understand each others experiences. In particular, I think white southerners need to make more of an effort to understand the perspective of black southerners, to understand why the history of the South is more than just "interesting."

Unfortunately, my experiences conducting this study do not convince me that this type of dialogue is happening. Through the process of finding people to interview through snowball sampling, I became aware of how little interaction there is, to this day, between most whites and blacks in the region. When I asked white respondents to help me locate African Americans who might be willing to participate in my study, many did not have any black friends to suggest as potential respondents. When I asked both white and black respondents about their contact with the other race, most stated that their social interactions took place mainly within their own race, though always stating that they would not mind if other races were part of their social circles. But no one seemed to want to actively reach out to the other side. So overall, in many ways I think the two groups are still quite separate, both socially, in everyday interactions, and collectively, as southerners who share and remember very different pasts.

Finally, this study highlights the need to look at social stigma as a complex phenomenon where both subjects of stigma and stigmatizers may have very different views of the "stigmatized" groups. In the case of southerners, who live in a relatively large region surrounded mostly by other southerners, the power of stigmatizing images seems to have little impact. The overwhelming majority of my southern respondents

viewed their group favorably, while feeling that outsiders see them in a negative light. Rather than being demoralizing, it seems that, at least in this case, stigma can be empowering, as Reed (1983) suggested when he discussed southernness as an identity in which group members (specifically, whites) feel a sense of grievance. This sense of being judged by outsiders who "don't understand" seems to bring out the southern pride in many. One recalls Betty Richardson who stated that her "accent just gets much thicker" when she encounters people who speak negatively about the region. This may also explain why whites who seem to embrace most enthusiastically their southernness, such as members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, like Paul Madison, who visited the Bob Evans restaurant in Charlotte, seem to enjoy the negative attention they receive when they wear Confederate Emblems. Feelings of persecution fuel group solidarity, a lesson demonstrated in my data and relevant beyond the South, as our present war in the Middle East demonstrates.

One should keep in mind that there are obvious limitations to my study. Due to the nature of interview studies and the use of snowball sampling, I was unable to obtain a large or representative sample. However, I did attempt to create a "sample of representatives" of the region to the best of my ability (Weiss 1994). Of course, I could not capture all the variation in the South in this study. The South is a large, complex region, with many different "sub-regions," such as the upper South, the mountain South, and the deep South. And of course there is the rural South and the urban, Sunbelt South. I chose the towns and cities where interviews took place to try to capture a bit of these different "Souths," but more studies are needed in other parts of the region to help validate some of my findings. Finally, the study would have benefited from the inclusion

of more migrants to the region, to better understand the process of acculturation/assimilation into the South, as well as the inclusion of more racial groups. Though these are limitations, they point to future avenues of promising research.

Future Research

My data pointed to several research questions in the area of whiteness studies that I would like to explore in the future, with both southerners and nonsoutherners. I would like to conduct in depth interviews with whites and focus more on their racial identity as white. What struck me about my interviews was this tendency of some white respondents to feel uncomfortable talking about their race, as if they were being racist by simply discussing their whiteness. Why does the dominant racial group of a society feel ashamed talking about race? I speculated that whites may feel uncomfortable because to talk about their own race would be involve some acknowledgement of racial privilege. To not see their own race as important might allow whites to also not see the race of other individuals as important for their life chances. Also, do whites feel they are missing something by not having a strong racial identity? Is this why they embrace regional or other "white ethnic" identities? What precisely is the link between whiteness and southern identity claims? These questions need to be addressed with more in-depth questioning about racial identity than the scope of this project allowed.

Another obvious limitation of my study is that I only interviewed people living in the South. There are many unanswered questions in the area of southern studies and ethnic/social identities that could be explored through interviewing non-southerners. For instance, do non-southerners really see southerners in a negative light, or are these merely

perceptions of those living in the South? Also, are other regional identities important in the United States, such as being northern, western, or mid-western? Do these identities make as strong a pull on those who claim them? And going back to whiteness studies, are whites in other regions more likely than blacks, or other racial groups, to identify with their regional identity as do whites in the South?

Finally, I hope eventually to incorporate other races into the study of southern identity. We know very little about how Latinos are assimilating into the South, even though large numbers of Latino people are migrating to the region. Do these folks see themselves as southern in any sense? What about their children who are born in the South? How do white and black southerners, who have a longer history in the region, feel about the influx of Latinos, and do they fear that their presence will change the culture of the South? These questions are important not just in terms of southern studies, but also in terms of understanding general processes of ethnic and cultural assimilation in general. The South offers a perfect site to examine these processes.

Conclusion

This dissertation is one of the very few – in some ways the only one -- that has used interviews with black and white southerners themselves in order to understand how southerners view their identity and region. Even more importantly, this is one of the only studies to talk in depth with black southerners about their regional identity. This study has provided meaningful insight into the fields of southern studies, stigma, social identity, and racial identity studies. Though many of these findings are only suggestive,

needing much more research and data to be validated, this work offers many exciting ideas for future research.

APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 1: Stereotypes of Southern Whites: Data from the 1990 General Social Survey

Respondents' Race/Region		Rich-Poor	Hard Working-Lazy	Violent-Not Violent	Unintelligent-Intelligent	Self Supporting-Live off Welfare	Patriotic-Unpatriotic
	Mean	4.09	3.46	4.36	4.43	3.23	2.55
Southern	N	308	307	297	306	300	297
Whites	Std Dev	1.031	1.240	1.125	1.178	1.297	1.294
	Mean	4.18	3.83	4.09	4.28	3.50	2.87
Northern	N	741	741	730	736	729	735
Whites	Std Dev	1.026	1.135	1.127	1.058	1.234	1.267
	Mean	3.75	3.39	3.81	4.30	3.49	2.60
Blacks	N	134	135	135	135	136	133
	Std Dev	1.520	1.441	1.689	1.437	1.515	1.487
	Mean	4.11	3.69	4.13	4.32	3.43	2.76
Total	N	1183	1183	1162	1177	1165	1165
	Std Dev	1.101	1.215	1.215	1.140	1.290	1.308
F =		8.897	15.294	10.384	1.997	4.685	7.642
p =		.000	.000	.000	.136[58]	.009	.001

[58] Though not significant among all three groups, differences in views of intelligence are significant between southern and northern whites (p =.039).

Table 2: Perceptions of Southerners as Stigmatized: Data from the Fall 1999 Southern Focus Polls

Respondents were asked the following:

a) Most non-Southerners look down on Southerners.

	Southerners	Northerners	Total
Agree	249 43.4%	119 23.7%	368 34.2%
Disagree	325 56.6%	383 76.3%	708 65.8%

Phi = .207, p<.000

b) Most non-Southerners dislike Southerners.

	Southerners	Northerners	Total
Agree	133 23.3%	58 11.7%	191 17.9%
Disagree	438 76.7%	438 88.3%	876 82.1%

Phi = .151, p<.000

c) Books and magazine articles about the South play up its bad points and don't give a fair picture.

	Southerners	Northerners	Total
Agree	287 53.3%	164 37.2%	451 46.1%
Disagree	251 46.7%	277 62.8%	528 53.9%

Phi = .161, p<.000

Table 3: Stereotypes of Southerners: Data from the Fall 1993 Southern Focus Poll

Respondents were asked the following questions in random order:

a) Here are some questions to find out how people feel about the South and Southerners. In general, do you think Southerners are more courteous or less courteous than people in other areas of the country?

	Southerners	Non-Southerners	Total
Southerners more	712 84.8%	316 79.2%	1028 83.0%
Southerners less	57 6.8%	11 2.8%	68 5.5%
About the Same (volunteered)	71 8.5%	72 18.0%	143 11.5%

Phi = .157, p<.000

b) In general, do you think Southerners are more religious or less religious than people in other areas of the country?

	Southerners	Non-Southerners	Total
Southerners more	640 78.4%	303 79.5%	943 78.8%
Southerners less	58 7.1%	9 2.4%	67 5.6%
About the Same (volunteered)	118 14.5%	69 18.1%	187 15.6%

Phi = .103, p<.002

c) In general, do you think Southerners are more hard-working or less hard-working than people in other areas of the country?

	Southerners	Non-Southerners	Total
Southerners more	406 52.2%	101 28.5%	507 44.7%
Southerners less	145 18.6%	97 27.3%	242 21.4%
About the Same (volunteered)	227 29.2%	157 44.2%	384 33.9%

Phi = .221, p<.000

d) In general, do you think Southerners are more pushy or less pushy than people in other areas of the country?

	Southerners	Non-Southerners	Total
Southerners more	128 15.6%	56 15.5%	184 15.6%
Southerners less	601 73.5%	220 60.9%	821 69.6%
About the Same (volunteered)	89 10.9%	85 23.5%	174 14.8%

Phi = .167, p<.000

e) In general, do you think Southerners are more patriotic or less patriotic than people in other areas of the country?

	Southerners	Non-Southerners	Total
Southerners more	542 68.8%	197 55.8%	739 64.8%
Southerners less	74 9.4%	28 7.9%	102 8.9%
About the Same (volunteered)	172 21.8%	128 36.3%	300 26.3%

Phi = .152, p<.000

f) In general, do you think Southerners are more loyal to family or less loyal to family than people in other areas of the country?

	Southerners	Non-Southerners	Total
Southerners more	602 75.3%	244 67.2%	846 72.8%
Southerners less	45 5.6%	15 4.1%	60 5.2%
About the Same (volunteered)	152 19.0%	104 28.7%	256 22.0%

Phi = .109, p<.001

g) In general, do you think Southerners are more conservative or less conservative than people in other areas of the country?

	Southerners	Non-Southerners	Total
Southerners more	622 76.2%	265 72.0%	887 74.9%
Southerners less	135 16.5%	55 14.9%	190 16.0%
About the Same (volunteered)	59 7.2%	48 13.0%	107 9.0%

Phi = .094, p<.005

h) In general, do you think Southerners are more violent or less violent than people in other areas of the country?

	Southerners	Non-Southerners	Total
Southerners more	152 19.0%	53 14.6%	205 17.7%
Southerners less	427 53.5%	160 44.1%	587 50.6%
About the Same (volunteered)	219 27.4%	150 41.3%	369 31.8%

Phi = .139, p<.000

i) In general, do you think Southerners are more contented with life or less contented with life than people in other areas of the country?

	Southerners	Non-Southerners	Total
Southerners more	599 75.6%	240 68.6%	839 73.5%
Southerners less	81 10.2%	25 7.1%	106 9.3%
About the Same (volunteered)	112 14.1%	85 24.3%	197 17.3%

Phi = .128, p<.000

j) In general, do you think Southerners are more intelligent or less intelligent than people in other areas of the country?

	Southerners	Non-Southerners	Total
Southerners more	182 24.5%	29 8.3%	211 19.3%
Southerners less	173 23.3%	61 17.5%	234 21.4%
About the Same (volunteered)	389 52.3%	258 74.1%	647 59.2%

Phi = .224, p<.000

Table 4: Identification as a Southerner: Data from Southern Focus Polls (all years)

Respondents in the geographic South were asked the following:

Do you consider yourself a Southerner, or not?

		White	Black	Total
Southerner Identification	Not Southern	3138	632	3770
		24.8%	22.2%	24.3%
	Southern	9526	2209	11,735
		75.2%	77.8%	75.7%

Phi = .023, p<.004

Table 5: Importance of Southern Identity: Data from Southern Focus Polls (Fall 1997, Spring 1998, Fall 1998, Spring 1999, Fall 1999, Spring 2000, and Spring 2001)

Respondents were asked the following:

Would you say that being a Southerner is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important to you?

		White	Black	Total
Importance of Southern Identity	Not at all important	564	178	742
		17.6%	28.3%	19.3%
	Not very important	576	91	667
		17.9%	14.4%	17.4%
	Somewhat important	1145	202	1347
		35.6%	32.1%	35.1%
	Very important	927	159	1086
		28.9%	25.2%	28.3%

Phi = .101, p<.000

Table 6: Religious Faith by Southern Identity: Data from the Southern Focus Polls (all years)

	Not Southern	Southern	Total
Baptist	828 13.8%	5176 86.2%	6004 100.0%
Methodist	377 20.9%	1430 79.1%	1807 100.0%
Lutheran	183 44.2%	231 55.8%	414 100.0%
Presbyterian	178 28.4%	448 71.6%	626 100.0%
Episcopalian	131 32.0%	279 68.0%	410 100.0%
Other Protestant	562 26.9%	1530 73.1%	2092 100.0%
Catholic	1045 45.5%	1254 54.5%	2299 100.0%
Jewish	123 66.8%	61 33.2%	184 100.0%
Other	374 33.5%	743 66.5%	1117 100.0%
None	399 44.6%	495 55.4%	894 100.0%

Phi = .293, $p<.000$

Table 7: Southern versus American Identity: Data from Fall 1997 Southern Focus Poll

Geographic southerners claiming a southern identity were asked the following:
What means more to you: being a Southern, or being an American?

	Southerner more	43 6.6%
	American more	591 90.5%
	Depends (Vol.)	19 2.9%
Total		653 100.0%

Table 8: Perception of Regional Patriotism by Southern Identity: Data from Spring 1992 Southern Focus Poll

Geographic southerners were asked the following question:
Now I'm going to read you some words that people use to describe other people. I'm going to ask you whether each word applies more to Northerners or to Southerners:
Patriotic.

	Does R Consider Self a Southerner		
	Yes, a Southerner	No, Not a Southerner	Total
Southerners	341 60.4%	84 39.1%	425 54.5%
Northerners	39 6.9%	27 12.6%	66 8.5%
No Difference	185 32.7%	104 48.4%	289 37.1%

Phi = .193, p<.000

Table 9: The Importance of Regional and Racial Identities for White Southerners: Data from Dissertation Interviews

RACE: Respondents were asked if their race was an important part of who they are.

REGION: Self-described southern respondents were asked if their southern identity was a very important part of who they are.

		REGIONAL IDENTITY	
		Not Important	Important
RACIAL IDENTITY	Not Important	5	8
	% within Race	38.5%	61.5%
	Important	5	5
	% within Race	50.0%	50.0%

Table 10: The Importance of Regional and Racial Identities for Black Southerners: Data from Dissertation Interviews

RACE: Respondents were asked if their race was an important part of who they are.

REGION: Self-described southern respondents were asked if their southern identity was a very important part of who they are.

		REGIONAL IDENTITY	
		Not Important	Important
RACIAL IDENTITY	Not Important		2
	% within Race		100.0%
	Important	15	7
	% within Race	68.2%	31.8%

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Document for Research

Principal Investigator: Ashley B. Thompson **Revision Date: 06/21/04**
Study Title: Southern Identity: The Meaning, Practice, and Importance of a Regional Identity
Institution/Hospital: Vanderbilt University

This informed consent document applies to adults (18 years of age or older) living in the South.

Name of participant: _____ Age: _____

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You are also free to withdraw from this study at any time. In the event new information becomes available that may affect the risks or benefits associated with this research study or your willingness to participate in it, you will be notified so that you can make an informed decision whether or not to continue your participation in this study.

1. **Purpose of the study:**

   Many people who live in the South call themselves southerners; however, researchers know little about how those who live in the South understand and relate to this identity. You will be asked about how you came to view yourself as a southerner (if you do), the sorts of things you do (if any) because of being a southerner, how you perceive the land and its people, and how you interpret its history. You will also be asked about how you feel about being southern and the importance of the identity in your personal life.

2. **Procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:**

   You will be asked to meet with me at a convenient time and place. You will be asked a series of questions about your attitudes and beliefs about southerners, your own identity as a southerner (if you claim to be a southerner), ways you might "practice" being southern, and your feelings about the South's past. With your permission, the interview will be tape recorded. The interview will be transcribed for later study. We will talk for approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours.

   An id number and a code name will be assigned to your tape. For example, if your true name is Melanie Carpenter, you may be given the code name of Josie Smith. Your true name will not appear in the interview. The code name will be used in the typed transcript and unique details about your identity will be changed so that you cannot be identified. Project reports will never identify you by your true name.

   The confidentiality of the information collected will be protected. All information, such as audio tapes and transcriptions of interviews, will be kept in locked files in a locked office when not in research use. Information will be used for research only and for no other purpose. Audio tapes will be stored until the completion of the study, at which time they will be erased. It is estimated that this project will be completed within the span of two years.

3. **Expected costs:**

There will be no costs associated with your participation in this interview, beyond the cost of your own time.

4. **Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study:**
   I do not anticipate that you will be made to feel uncomfortable, inconvenienced, or put at risk. If you are uncomfortable about answering a question that I have asked, I will gladly skip that question and go on to others. You may choose to end the interview at any time.

5. **Anticipated benefits from this study:**
   a) The potential benefits to science and humankind that may result from this study include an increased knowledge about the meaning of southern identity for those who live in the South and the importance of the identity in their lives.
   b) You will not benefit directly from this study. However, many people enjoy talking about the South and sharing their experiences and knowledge about the region.

6. **Compensation for participation:**
   You will not be directly compensated for your participation in this study.

7. **What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation:**
   You can withdraw from this study at any time without suffering any consequences. If you choose to withdraw from the study after the interview has begun, the information collected up until that point will be used for the study with your permission. If you do not wish for this information to be used in the study, the audio tape for your interview will be erased.

8. **Contact Information.** If you should have any questions about this research study or possibly injury, please feel free to contact **Ashley B. Thompson** at **(615) 258-3357** or my Faculty Advisor**, Dr. Gary Jensen** at **(615) 322-7534.**

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board Office at (615) 322-2918 or toll free at (866) 224-8273.

9. **Your rights, welfare, and privacy will be protected in the following ways:**

   (1) All data obtained about you during the course of this study will be kept confidential and accessible only to the researcher.

   (2) Should the results of this project be published, you will be referred to only by number or by a pseudonym (like "Josie Smith" for Melanie Carpenter).

Confidentiality Information:

All reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private and confidential, but absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Your information may be shared with institutional and/or governmental authorities, such as the Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board, if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

STATEMENT BY PERSON AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I have read this informed consent document and the material contained in it has been explained to me verbally. All my questions have been answered, and I freely and voluntarily choose to participate.

Date _____ Signature of volunteer _____

I give my permission for this interview to be tape-recorded.

Date _____ Signature of volunteer _____

Consent obtained by:

Date _____ Signature _____

Ashley B. Thompson

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE BY RACE AND REGIONAL LOCATION

Name	Location	Race
Chris Barclay	Baton Rouge	White
Brigitte Canning	Baton Rouge	White
Doug Chambers	Baton Rouge	Black
Grace Connors	Baton Rouge	Black
Isabel Connors	Baton Rouge	Black
Greg Coppage	Baton Rouge	White
Charles Davis	Baton Rouge	White
Jan Davis	Baton Rouge	White
Dennis Godin	Baton Rouge	White
Martin Hooper	Baton Rouge	Black
Claire Kendall	Baton Rouge	White
David Leary	Baton Rouge	Black
Shonda Murphy	Baton Rouge	Black
Kay Pearce	Baton Rouge	White
Sue Rivet	Baton Rouge	White
Julien Scott	Baton Rouge	Black
Patricia Simpson	Baton Rouge	White
Darren Winters	Baton Rouge	Black
Sandra Winters	Baton Rouge	Black
Anna Brown	Marion	White
Steven Campbell	Marion	White
Katrina Carson	Marion	Black
Amanda Coble	Marion	White
Linda Dobbs	Marion	White
Gloria Fredericks	Marion	Black
Joseph Freedom	Marion	Black
Nick Godfrey	Marion	Black
Mark Hobbes	Marion	White
William Lancaster	Marion	White
Paul Madison	Marion	White
Marge Mayfield	Marion	Black
Leslie McSwain	Marion	White
George Nickleson	Marion	Black
Betty Richardson	Marion	White
Harry Stanford	Marion	Black
Jeff Thompson	Marion	Black
Amelia Trudell	Marion	Black
Teresa West	Marion	Black
Jerry Williams	Marion	White
Nakita Blackwell	Nashville	Black
Wanda Burgess	Nashville	Black
Larry Carpenter	Nashville	Black
Fred Clump	Nashville	Black
Brent Daniels	Nashville	White
Jennifer Dartmouth	Nashville	White
Henry Goodman	Nashville	Black
Lisa Harrison	Nashville	White

Betty Hilgurt	Nashville	White
Paul Hope	Nashville	White
Brent Jacobs	Nashville	White
Ted Jefferson	Nashville	White
Lawrence Jennings	Nashville	Black
Rebecca Laster	Nashville	Black
Donna Levert	Nashville	Black
John Marshal	Nashville	White
Peter Nelson	Nashville	White
Sally Polito	Nashville	White
Michael Roberts	Nashville	White
Tyler Sanders	Nashville	Black
Curtis Slocum	Nashville	Black
Kate Thomisee	Nashville	White
Gerald Tyson	Nashville	Black
Mike Watson	Nashville	White
Yolanda White	Nashville	Black
Brian Winfree	Nashville	Black

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE BY AGE, INCOME, SOUTHERN IDENTIFICATION, EDUCATION, AND GENDER

	Name	Age	Income	Southern ID	Education	Gender
Baton Rouge						
	Chris Barclay	33	$30-$44,999	Southern	College Degree	Male
	Brigitte Canning	65	$15-$29,999	Southern	HS Diploma	Female
	Doug Chambers	25	$15-$29,999	Southern	Some Grad School	Male
	Grace Connors	83	$14,999 or less	Southern	Less than HS	Female
	Isabel Connors	40	$14,999 or less	Southern	Some College	Female
	Greg Coppage	51	$60,000 or more	Southern	Some College	Male
	Charles Davis	83	$60,000 or more	Southern	College Degree	Male
	Jan Davis	81	$60,000 or more	Southern	College Degree	Female
	Dennis Godin	65	$45-$59,999	Southern	Some College	Male
	Martin Hooper	69	$30-$44,999	Southern	Prof. Degree	Male
	Claire Kendall	74	$15-$29,999	Southern	Prof. Degree	Female
	David Leary	49	$30-$44,999	Not Southern	Some College	Male
	Shonda Murphy	57	$14,999 or less	Southern	Some College	Female
	Kay Pearce	74	$15-$29,999	Not Southern	College Degree	Female
	Sue Rivet	45	$15-$29,999	Southern	HS Diploma	Female
	Julien Scott	58	$45-$59,999	Southern	Prof. Degree	Male
	Patricia Simpson	24	$15-$29,999	Southern	College Degree	Female
	Darren Winters	39	$15-29,999	Southern	HS Diploma	Male
	Sandra Winters	35	$15-$29,999	Southern	Some College	Female
Marion						
	Anna Brown	72	$30-$44,999	Southern	Prof. Degree	Female
	Steven Campbell	41	$15-$29,999	Southern	Some College	Male
	Katrina Carson	26	$14,999 or less	Southern	College Degree	Female
	Amanda Coble	30	$15-$29,999	Southern	College Degree	Female
	Linda Dobbs	43	$60,000 or more	Southern	Prof. Degree	Female
	Gloria Fredericks	81	$14,999 or less	Southern	HS Diploma	Female
	Joseph Freedom	88	$14,999 or less	Southern	HS Diploma	Male
	Nick Godfrey	53	$45-$59,999	Southern	Some College	Male
	Mark Hobbes	38	$15-$29,999	Southern	College Degree	Male
	William Lancaster	46	$30-$44,999	Southern	College Degree	Male
	Paul Madison	48	$60,000 or more	Southern	Some College	Male
	Marge Mayfield	31	$15-$29,999	Southern	Some College	Female
	Leslie McSwain	21	$14,999 or less	Southern	Some College	Female
	George Nickleson	22	$14,999 or less	Southern	Some College	Male
	Betty Richardson	48	$45-$59,999	Southern	HS Diploma	Female
	Harry Stanford	57	$30-$44,999	Southern	Some Grad School	Male
	Jeff Thompson	46	$30-$44,999	Southern	Some College	Male
	Amelia Trudell	49	$30-$44,999	Southern	Some College	Female
	Teresa West	69	$14,999 or less	Southern	HS Diploma	Female

	Jerry Williams	77	$15-$29,999	Southern	Some College	Male
Nashville						
	Nakita Blackwell	49	$30-$44,999	Southern	Prof. Degree	Female
	Wanda Burgess	28	$30-$44,999	Southern	Prof. Degree	Female
	Larry Carpenter	55	$60,000 or more	Southern	Prof. Degree	Male
	Fred Clump	58	$60,000 or more	Southern	Prof. Degree	Male
	Brent Daniels	62	$60,000 or more	Southern	College Degree	Male
	Jennifer Dartmouth	54	$60,000 or more	Southern	Prof. Degree	Female
	Henry Goodman	78	$15-$29,999	Southern	Less than HS	Male
	Lisa Harrison	41	$60,000 or more	Southern	College Degree	Female
	Betty Hilgurt	43	$60,000 or more	Southern	College Degree	Female
	Paul Hope	31	$30-$44,999	Southern	Some College	Male
	Brent Jacobs	57	$60,000 or more	Southern	College Degree	Male
	Ted Jefferson	53	$60,000 or more	Southern	Prof. Degree	Male
	Lawrence Jennings	59	$60,000 or more	Southern	Prof. Degree	Male
	Rebecca Laster	23	$15-$29,999	Southern	Some Grad School	Female
	Donna Levert	49	$60,000 or more	Southern	Prof. Degree	Female
	John Marshal	68	$60,000 or more	Not Southern	Prof. Degree	Male
	Peter Nelson	21	$14,999 or less	Southern	Some College	Male
	Sally Polito	22	$15-$29,999	Southern	College Degree	Female
	Michael Roberts	55	$60,000 or more	Southern	College Degree	Male
	Tyler Sanders	54	$45-$59,999	Southern	College Degree	Male
	Curtis Slocum	25	$15-$29,999	Not Southern	Some College	Male
	Kate Thomisee	26	$14,999 or less	Southern	College Degree	Female
	Gerald Tyson	65	$60,000 or more	Southern	Prof. Degree	Male
	Mike Watson	37	$15-$29,999	Not Southern	Some Grad School	Male
	Yolanda White	32	$15-$29,999	Not Southern	Some College	Female
	Brian Winfree	21	$15-$29,999	Southern	Some College	Male

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDES

I. Guide for Respondents Claiming a Southern Identity

Background Questions on Southern Identity:

Do you consider yourself to be a southerner? Why?
Do you consider your parents to be southerners? Why?
How long have you lived in the South?
- Where did you live before you came to the South?
- Why did you come to the South?
- Where were you born?
- Where did you grow up?
- Where else have you lived?

Tell me about the town where you grew up.
Describe the neighborhood where you grew up.
- Racial/ethnic make-up
- Income/class

When you were growing up, did you consider yourself to be a southerner?
- When did you first realize that you were a southerner?

Did your parents talk about being southerners? In what way?
- Do you think being southern was very important to your parents? How do you know this?

Did you know many people growing up who were not southerners? Tell me about these people (what was your relationship to them; how did you feel about them)
- Do you know many people now who are not southerners? (What is your relationship to them; how do you feel about them)

How important to you is being a southerner? Why is it important? Can you think of times in your life when it has been more or less important to you to be a southerner?
When do you think of yourself as a southerner?
Are there any southern customs or practices that are a part of your everyday life, such as food, music, or cultural events? Are there particular traditions that you follow on holidays? What about religious practices? Are there other things that you do in your life that you think are distinctly southern?

Images of Southerners and Stigma:

How would you describe the South? What images come to mind when you think about the region?
How would you describe southerners? What traits do you associate with southerners?
- What are the best traits you associate with southerners? What are the worst traits?
- Do you think southerners are distinct from people of other regions? What is at the heart of this distinction?

Are there any people or groups that you think cannot be southerners? Why?

Does one particular racial or ethnic group come to mind when you think of southerners? Which one and why?

Are people of all racial groups able to be southerners? If not, which ones do you think cannot be southerners? Why? (ask about Latinos/Asians/Native Americans)

Overall, what makes a southerner? What criteria allows one to say they are southern?

Describe a typical person from outside of the South. What are their best traits? What are their worst traits? How do you know about people outside of the South. Have you traveled much in other regions?

How do you think southerners are viewed by those outside of the region? How do you think an outsider would describe a typical southerner? Where do you think they get their understanding of southerners? Do you think people outside of the South overall have a positive or negative view of the South? How do these views of the South make you feel?

Do people comment on your southernness very often? Tell me about the last time that someone commented on your southernness?

Do you believe you have a southern accent? Do people ever comment on your accent? Please describe the last time someone commented on your accent.

Do you ever feel discriminated against because you are a southerner? Describe to me an instance when this has occurred? How did it make you feel?

Do jokes about southerners bother you? When or where do you hear these jokes? Does it matter whether they are told by a southerner or a person from outside the region?

Do you ever tell jokes about southerners? What kinds? What do you think southerners mean when they tell jokes about each other? Do you ever tell jokes about people from outside of the region? What kinds?

Do you ever refer to people as rednecks? How would you describe a "redneck"? Have you ever been called a "redneck"? Have other names been used to describe you based on your southernness (such as hillbilly, hick, bama, cracker, etc.)? Do you refer to yourself by any of these names. How do you feel when you hear these names?

Do you enjoy being a southerner? What do you like about it? Are you proud of your southernness?

Do you ever feel that you benefit in some way from being a southerner? When or how?

Would you ever live outside of the South?

Now I want to talk a little about the history of the South…

<u>Race and Southern Identity</u>:

When thinking about the history of the South, what comes to mind? What feelings do you associate with the history of the South (pride, guilt, anger, etc)? How important is southern history to you?

What do you believe that Civil War was about? Do you think most southerners have a similar view of the War? Did any of your ancestors fight in the Civil War? For which side? How do you feel about their participation?

How do you feel about monuments to Confederate Veterans?

Are there particular symbols that you associate with the South? How do you feel about these symbols? Do these symbols represent who you are as a southerner? Do you display any symbols or embrace symbols that you feel are southern?

How do you feel about the Civil Rights Movement? Was it positive or negative? If your parents were alive during the movement, how did they feel about it? How do you think most southerners feel about the Civil Rights Movement?

Did you or any of your relatives participate in the Civil Rights Movement? Describe the nature of their participation? How do you feel about your/their participation?

How do you feel about white southerners? Black southerners?

Do you think black and white southerners have a lot in common? Why or why not?

Do you feel that there is an appropriate way for white southerners to express their heritage? What would that be? What about black southerners?

I have a few more questions I would like to ask…

Ethnicity and Southern Identity:

Do you feel more comfortable with other southerners? Why?

Are you married? Do you have any children?

Would you marry someone from outside the South (or would you mind if your children married someone outside of the South)? Why or why not?

If you have children, or plan to have them in the future, do you want them to identify as southerners? Why or why not?

(If respondent has children) Do your children identify as southerners? Is it very important to them?

Is there a particular race or ethnicity that you identify yourself as? What is it? Is it more important to you to be _____ or to be southern? Do you think of yourself as southern sometimes, and a _____ at other times? When does this happen? Can you give me an example of when you think of yourself as a southerner, and when you think of yourself as a _____?

Is it more important to you that you are a southerner, or an American? Why?

Do you think of yourself as a southerner sometimes, and an American at other times? When does this happen? Can you give me an example of when being an American is important to you; when being a southerner is important to you?

Denouement:

Is there anything you wished I had asked you during the course of this interview, or that you thought I would have asked? Do you have any other comments or areas that you would like to discuss that we have not covered?

Do you know other people like yourself that I could talk to? Would you mind if I use your name when I call them?

Background Information:

What is your occupation?

What is the highest level of education you completed?

Roughly, what is your income?
What is your religion?
Would you describe yourself as conservative or liberal?
With what political party are you affiliated?
Do you have any children? How many?
Are you married?
What is your date of birth?

II. Guide for Non-Southerner Respondents (Those who migrated to the South and do not claim a southern identity):

Background Questions on Southern Identity:

Do you consider yourself to be a southerner? Why or why not?
Do you identify yourself based on residence in another region?
Do you consider your parents or any of your relatives to be southerners? Why or why not? Do they identify themselves based on residence in another region?
How long have you lived in the South?
    Where were you born?
    Where did you grow up?
    Where did you live before you came to the South?
    Why did you come to the South?
    What did you expect the South to be like when you moved here? Had you visited before? Did you have a positive or negative feeling about moving here?
    Where else have you lived?
Tell me about the town where you grew up.
Describe the neighborhood where you grew up.
    Racial/ethnic make-up
    Income/class
When you were growing up, did you consider yourself to be a (regional identity)?
    When did you first realize that you were a (regional identity)?
Did your parents talk about being (regional identity)? In what way?
    Do you think being (regional identity) was very important to your parents? How do you know this?
Did you know many people growing up who were southerners? Tell me about these people (what was your relationship to them; how did you feel about them)
    Do you know many people now who are southerners? (What is your relationship to them; how do you feel about them)
How important to you is being a (regional identity)? Why is it important? Can you think of times in your life when it has been more or less important to you to be a (regional identity)?
When do you think of yourself as a (regional identity)?
Are there any (regional) customs or practices that are a part of your everyday life, such as food, music, or cultural events? Are there particular traditions that you follow on holidays? What about religious practices? Are there other things that you do in your life that you think are distinctly (regional identity)?

I now want to talk more specifically about southerners…

Images of Southerners and Stigma:

How would you describe the South? What images come to mind when you think about the region?

How would you describe southerners? What traits do you associate with southerners? What are the best traits you associate with southerners? What are the worst traits? Do you think southerners are distinct from people of other regions? From your own region? What is at the heart of this distinction?

Are there any people or groups that you think cannot be southerners? Why?

Does one particular racial or ethnic group come to mind when you think of southerners? Which one and why?

Are people of all racial groups able to be southerners? If not, which ones do you think cannot be southerners? Why? (ask about Latinos/Asians/Native Americans)

Overall, what makes a southerner? What criteria allows one to say they are southern?

Describe a typical person from outside of the South. What are their best traits? What are their worst traits? How do you know about people outside of the South. Have you traveled much in other regions?

How do you think southerners are viewed by those outside of the region? How do you think an outsider would describe a typical southerner? Where do you think they get their understanding of southerners? Do you think people outside of the South overall have a positive or negative view of the South? Do you think these views are appropriate?

How do you think people in your own region think of southerners? Did you, your friends, or family ever talk about the South much or think about it before you moved to the region?

What did your friends or family think when you told them you were moving to the South?

Do you think southerners are discriminated against? In what ways?

Do you ever hear jokes about southerners? When or where do you hear these jokes? How do you feel about these jokes? Do you think they are funny?

Do you ever tell jokes about southerners? What kinds?

Do you ever hear the term redneck much? How would you describe a "redneck"? Do you associate this term, or any others, with the South? What about other terms such as hillbilly, hick, bama, or cracker? Have you ever been called any of these names or refer to yourself by any of these names? Have you called other people by these names? How do you feel when you hear these names?

Now I want to talk a little about the history of the South…

Race and Southern Identity:

When thinking about the history of the South, what comes to mind? What feelings do

you associate with the history of the South (pride, guilt, anger, etc)? How important is southern history to you?

What do you believe that Civil War was about? Do you think most southerners have a similar view of the War? Did any of your ancestors fight in the Civil War? For which side? How do you feel about their participation?

How do you feel about monuments to Confederate Veterans?

Are there particular symbols that you associate with the South? How do you feel about these symbols? What do you think these symbols represent?

How do you feel about the Civil Rights Movement? Was it positive or negative? If your parents were alive during the movement, how did they feel about it? How do you think most southerners feel about the Civil Rights Movement?

Did you or any of your relatives participate in the Civil Rights Movement? Describe the nature of their participation? How do you feel about your/their participation?

How do you feel about white southerners? Black southerners?

Do you think black and white southerners have a lot in common? Why or why not?

Do you feel that there is an appropriate way for white southerners to express their heritage? What would that be? What about black southerners?

I have a few more questions I would like to ask about your own regional identity…

Exploring Other Regional Identities:

Do people comment on your (regional identity) very often? Tell me about the last time that someone commented on your (regional identity)?

Do you believe you have an accent? Do people ever comment on your accent? Please describe the last time someone commented on your accent.

Do you ever feel discriminated against because you are (regional identity)? Describe to me an instance when this has occurred? How did it make you feel?

Do you ever hear jokes about (regional identity)? When or where do you hear these jokes? How do you feel about these jokes? Do you think they are funny?

Do you ever tell jokes about (regional identity)? What kinds?

Do you enjoy being a (regional identity)? What do you like about it? Are you proud of your (regional identity)?

Do you ever feel that you benefit in some way from being a (regional identity)? When or how?

Do you feel more comfortable with other (regional identity)? Why?

Are you married? Do you have any children?

Would you marry someone from the South (or would you mind if your children married someone from the South)? Why or why not?

If you have children, or plan to have them in the future, do you want them to identify as Southerners, or as (regional identity)? Why?

(If respondent has children) Do your children identify as southerners or (regional identity)? Is it very important to them?

Is there a particular race or ethnicity that you identify yourself as? What is it? Is it more important to you to be _____ or to be (regional identity)? Do you think of yourself as (regional identity) sometimes, and a _____ at other times? When does this happen? Can you give me an example of when you think of

yourself as a (regional identity) and when you think of yourself as _____?
Is it more important to you that you are a (regional identity), or an American? Why?
Do you think of yourself as a (regional identity) sometimes, and an American at other times? When does this happen? Can you give me an example of when being an American is important to you; when being a (regional identity) is important to you?
And finally, do you think you will stay in the South? Do you think there will ever be a time when you consider yourself a southerner, instead of a (regional identity)? Do you ever wish you were a southerner?

Denouement:

Is there anything you wished I had asked you during the course of this interview, or that you thought I would have asked? Do you have any other comments or areas that you would like to discuss that we have not covered?

Do you know other people like yourself that I could talk to? Would you mind if I use your name when I call them?

Background Information:
What is your occupation?
What is the highest level of education you completed?
Roughly, what is your income?
What is your religion?
Would you describe yourself as conservative or liberal?
With what political party are you affiliated?
Do you have any children? How many?
Are you married?
What is your date of birth?

III. Guide for those born/raised in the South who reject a southern identity:

Background Questions on Southern Identity:
Do you consider yourself to be a southerner? Why not?
Do your parents consider themselves to be southerners? Why?
How long have you lived in the South?
Where did you live before you came to the South?
Why did you come to the South?
Where were you born?
Where did you grow up?
Where else have you lived?
Tell me about the town where you grew up.
Describe the neighborhood where you grew up.

Racial/ethnic make-up
Income/class

When you were growing up, did you consider yourself to be a southerner?
When did you first realize that you were a southerner?

Did your parents talk about being southerners? In what way?
Do you think being southern was very important to your parents? How do you know this?

Did you know many people growing up who were not southerners? Tell me about these people (what was your relationship to them; how did you feel about them)
Do you know many people now who are not southerners? (What is your relationship to them; how do you feel about them)

Are there any southern customs or practices that are a part of your everyday life, such as food, music, or cultural events? Are there particular traditions that you follow on holidays? What about religious practices? Are there other things that you do in your life that you think are distinctly southern?

<u>Images of Southerners and Stigma</u>:

How would you describe the South? What images come to mind when you think about the region?

How would you describe southerners? What traits do you associate with southerners?
What are the best traits you associate with southerners? What are the worst traits?
Do you think southerners are distinct from people of other regions? What is at the heart of this distinction?

Are there any people or groups that you think cannot be southerners? Why?
Does one particular racial or ethnic group come to mind when you think of southerners? Which one and why?
Are people of all racial groups able to be southerners? If not, which ones do you think cannot be southerners? Why? (ask about Latinos/Asians/Native Americans)

Overall, what makes a southerner? What criteria allows one to say they are southern?

Describe a typical person from outside of the South. What are their best traits? What are their worst traits? How do you know about people outside of the South. Have you traveled much in other regions?

How do you think southerners are viewed by those outside of the region? How do you think an outsider would describe a typical southerner? Where do you think they get their understanding of southerners? Do you think people outside of the South overall have a positive or negative view of the South? How do these views of the South make you feel?

Do people identify you as a southerner very often? Tell me about the last time that someone identified you as southern? How does this make you feel? How do you deal with the situation?

Do you believe you have a southern accent? Do people ever comment on your accent? Please describe the last time someone commented on your accent.

Do you ever feel discriminated against because you are from the South? Describe to me an instance when this has occurred? How did it make you feel?

Do jokes about southerners bother you? When or where do you hear these jokes? Does

it matter whether they are told by a southerner or a person from outside the region?

Do you ever tell jokes about southerners? What kinds? What do you think southerners mean when they tell jokes about each other? Do you ever tell jokes about people from outside of the region? What kinds?

Do you ever refer to people as rednecks? How would you describe a "redneck"? Have you ever been called a "redneck"? Have other names been used to describe you based on your southernness (such as hillbilly, hick, bama, cracker, etc.)? Do you refer to yourself by any of these names. How do you feel when you hear these names?

Tell me a little bit more about the fact that you don't identify as southern. Do you feel ashamed of your southern roots? Do you identify with any other region? Does it bother you in any way that you do not have a strong regional identity? When you think of who you are, what other identities come to mind?

Even though you do not identify as southern, do you ever feel that you benefit in some way from being from the South? When or how?

Would you ever live outside of the South?

Can you envision any time in the future when you would consider yourself a southerner?

Now I want to talk a little about the history of the South…

<u>Race and Southern Identity</u>:

When thinking about the history of the South, what comes to mind? What feelings do you associate with the history of the South (pride, guilt, anger, etc)? How important is southern history to you?

What do you believe that Civil War was about? Do you think most southerners have a similar view of the War? Did any of your ancestors fight in the Civil War? For which side? How do you feel about their participation?

How do you feel about monuments to Confederate Veterans?

Are there particular symbols that you associate with the South? How do you feel about these symbols? Do these symbols represent who you are as a person from the South? Do you display any symbols or embrace symbols that you feel are southern?

How do you feel about the Civil Rights Movement? Was it positive or negative? If your parents were alive during the movement, how did they feel about it? How do you think most southerners feel about the Civil Rights Movement?

Did you or any of your relatives participate in the Civil Rights Movement? Describe the nature of their participation? How do you feel about your/their participation?

How do you feel about white southerners? Black southerners?

Do you think black and white southerners have a lot in common? Why or why not?

Do you feel that there is an appropriate way for white southerners to express their heritage? What would that be? What about black southerners?

I have a few more questions I would like to ask…

Ethnicity and Southern Identity:

Even though you don't identify as southern, do you feel more comfortable with other southerners? Why?

Are you married? Do you have any children?

Would you marry someone from outside the South (or would you mind if your children married someone outside of the South)? Why or why not?

If you have children, or plan to have them in the future, do you want them to identify as southerners? Why or why not?

(If respondent has children) Do your children identify as southerners? Is it very important to them?

Do you identify yourself with any particular race or ethnicity? How important is this identity to you? Is it more important to be _____ or American?

Denouement:

Is there anything you wished I had asked you during the course of this interview, or that you thought I would have asked? Do you have any other comments or areas that you would like to discuss that we have not covered?

Do you know other people like yourself that I could talk to? Would you mind if I use your name when I call them?

Background Information:

What is your occupation?

What is the highest level of education you completed?

Roughly, what is your income?

What is your religion?

Would you describe yourself as conservative or liberal?

With what political party are you affiliated?

Do you have any children? How many?

Are you married?

What is your date of birth?

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