Racialized Conflict and Policy Spillover Effects:
Welfare Reform Politics in Georgia and Alabama[1]

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Abstract

This article introduces a racialized conflict theory to explain how racial divisions structure welfare state development in the absence of *de jure* discrimination. I explain the effect of racial divisions on policy outcomes as the result of the attitudinal, cultural, and political spillover effects of prevailing conflicts in a social field. Using a paired-case comparison and analysis of multiple data sources, I apply this theory to analyze Georgia and Alabama's surprisingly divergent welfare reforms in the 1990s. Results support the racialized conflict theory and suggest important revisions to prevailing theories about the sociopolitical effects of contemporary racial divides.

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During the second half of the 20th century, a paradox emerged in U.S. race relations (Bobo and Charles 2009). On one hand, the civil rights movement and resultant legislation eroded legal barriers to integration, and gradually transformed the norms governing race relations (Schuman et al. 1998). By 1997, 95% of Americans professed their support for racial integration in public facilities, evidencing widespread acceptance of the ideal of racial equality (Bobo 2001; Mendelberg 2001). On the other hand, despite these positive transformations, racial divisions remain a defining feature of contemporary social life. Employment, housing, and education outcomes are powerfully shaped by race (Pager 2003; Massey and Denton 1998; Tyson 2011). The demise of *de jure* discrimination has done little to diminish the centrality of race in American politics. Indeed, racial attitudes and demographics remain among the most powerful predictors of policy opinions and outcomes (Bobo 2001; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Gilens 1995). This paradox has challenged researchers to explain how racial divisions manage to order a post-civil rights and "color blind" America.

This dilemma has particularly puzzled scholars of the welfare state, one of the most racialized of political domains. Since the earliest days of U.S. welfare state development, racial inequalities have hampered efforts to establish a robust social safety net for the poor (Fox 2012; Neubeck and Cazanave 2001; Reese 2005). New Deal policies limited Black welfare participation and institutionalized racialized welfare restrictions (Katznelson 2005; Lieberman 1998; Quadagno 1996). Civil rights gains have done little to alter the strength of the race-policy relationship. Racial attitudes still drive public opposition to welfare, despite sweeping positive changes in race relations (Gilens 1999). Racial context – the percentage of Blacks in a

community – remains a powerful predictor of welfare generosity today, just as it did in the early and mid-20th century (Fox 2012; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011; Weaver and Gais 2002).

If the race-policy relationship has not declined in significance, the mechanisms governing it have radically changed. Racial divisions once affected welfare state development through explicitly racialized economic systems and political rhetoric laden with overt racist language. Today, racial divisions pattern policy outcomes despite the race-neutral design of contemporary welfare policies and despite declines in explicit racial discourse. Theories developed to explain the racialized foundations of the New Deal and War on Poverty are unable to explain the new terrain of racial politics (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011).

This article investigates how racial divisions structure contemporary policy formation in the absence of *de jure* discrimination. Scholars have offered varying answers to this question, but prevailing accounts of late-20th century welfare policy focus overwhelmingly on racial attitudes, stereotypes, and cognition (Gilens 1999; Hancock 2004; Mendelberg 2001; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011). These approaches provide a useful window into the individual-level and social psychological processes that underlie policy opinions. However, they are limited in their explanatory power for at least two reasons. First, because they treating race relations and policy outcomes as an agglomeration of individual attitudes, many existing approaches understate the historically-contingent and collective nature of both. Second, by viewing welfare as an independent policy domain, such theories also overlook the possibility that deliberations about other policy issues might spillover into welfare debates, affecting political salience of race. These oversights arise in part because of methodological choices. Most analyses of race and the welfare state are quantitative studies which struggle to capture the lived complexities of race (Saperstein 2006) and the policy process (Soule and King 2006).

Answering calls to take seriously the constructed nature of race (Loveman 1999; Winant 2000), this article presents a racialized conflict theory of welfare policy development. This theory explains the effect of racial divisions on policy outcomes as the result of the spillover effects of prevailing conflicts in a social field. I demonstrate how racialized conflicts, events or series of events which make racial divisions salient and racially polarize political groups, fuel the passage of stricter social policies by activating racial attitudes and by creating a racialized discursive opportunity structure for activists and policy elites engaged in welfare policymaking. As a result, racialized conflicts create electoral advantages for politicians who support strict policies. The theory reformulates attitudinal, cultural, and political theories of the race-policy relationship and integrates them into a unified framework. In doing so, it suggests a need to rethink extant understandings of how public opinion, culture, and political pressures affect the democratic process.

My analysis of Georgia and Alabama's responses to the 1996 welfare reform act demonstrate these effects. "Welfare reform" marked a turning point in American political development, signaling a shift toward new forms of neoliberal and paternalist governance (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011). The act eliminated individual entitlements to poverty relief, replacing the long-standing Aid to Families with Dependent Children with a block grant to states, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Echoing growing political discourse about individual responsibility and small government, the reforms shifted the focus of anti-poverty policy toward regulating the behavior of recipients, enforcing new work requirements and a lifetime time limit on benefits. After the reforms passed, the federal government left states to recalibrate their welfare policies to meet federal mandates. For the first time in three decades, each of the fifty states was charged with working out a series of new policies. This yielded both

a diverse array of regulations and a rich source of data for studying policy formation. In this context, Georgia and Alabama pursued strikingly different paths. While Georgia passed some of the most punitive welfare reforms in the country, Alabama enacted some of the most lenient, on par with historically generous states like Hawaii and Vermont.

Since both states had large black populations and similar political and economic arrangements, existing theories of welfare state development would have predicted that both would adopt stringent reforms. However, only in Georgia did racially conservative attitudes and stereotypes translate into restrictive welfare policies. This article draws on archival research, content analysis, in-depth interviews, and public opinion data to show how a protracted and racialized debate about the Confederate flag in Georgia spilled over into welfare politics, resulting in the passage of strict reforms. In Alabama, the tort reform debates which preoccupied the state political scene prior to welfare reform limited the salience of racial categories, leaving pro-welfare advocates and sympathetic policy elites ample room to deflect the racialization of welfare and win support for lenient reforms. Years later, however, following a racially polarized battle over voter identification, Alabama's policy elites enforced punitive policies. These results suggest that while racial attitudes and stereotypes may be an enduring force in American politics, it is racialized conflicts that make these divisions highly consequential for policy.

Race and the U.S. Welfare State

At least since Tocqueville's ([1838] 2004) treatise on American democracy, scholars have cited racial divisions as a major stumbling block in U.S. political development. Contemporary party alignments and tax policies reflect the enduring scars of racial divisions (Carmines and Stimson 1990; Edsall and Edsall 1992). In policy domains as diverse as

immigration, education, and crime, tense race relations and inequalities have structured the content and timing of formative legislation (Katznelson and Weir 1988; Ngai 1999; Tonry 2004). Few policy domains have been as subject to racial politics as welfare. In comparison to its European counterparts, the U.S. welfare state developed late, offers minimal protections, and is unusually vulnerable to political attacks. Although welfare state scholars originally attributed the these features to weak labor party coalitions and institutional forces (Hacker 2002; Huber and Stephens 2001; Orloff and Skocpol 1984), research now illuminates the primacy of racial divisions in the underdevelopment of the U.S. welfare state (Goldberg 2008; Neubeck and Cazanave 2001; Reese 2005).

The effect of racial divisions on social welfare policy can be traced back as far as the 19th and early 20th centuries. Before the advent of federal relief programs, municipalities and private charities provided the bulk of anti-poverty assistance. Racial demographics were a driving force behind these policy decisions: cities with the largest Black and Latino populations spent less on poverty relief and were more likely to use private rather than public funds (Fox 2012). Racial divisions also structured central provisions of the Social Security Act. White land owners advocated for limited welfare protections, fearing more generous benefits would cost them low-wage Black workers (Neubeck and Cazanave 2001). The resulting legislation segregated welfare access by occupation and work status, limiting Black access to cash relief and institutionalizing racial inequalities in social programs (Lieberman 1998). In the 1950s and 1960s, racialized political and economic relations continued to limit efforts to expand the social safety net (Reese 2005). After the Civil Rights Movement, White anti-welfare sentiment escalated in response to Black economic activism, limiting the effectiveness and appeal of more expansive social programs (Quadagno 1996).

There is remarkably consistent evidence that racial divisions continue to structure welfare policies today. As the proportion of ethno-racial minorities rises, the generosity of benefits declines and the terms of welfare participation become stricter (Eger 2010; Reese 2005; Soss et al. 2001; Weaver and Gais 2002). This relationship persists whether the unit of analysis is the city, the state, or the nation-state (Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Fellowes and Rowe 2004; Fox 2012). Indeed, when the United States overhauled its cash welfare programs in 1996, the percentage Black in a state shifted from being one of many factors correlated with state policy choices to being *the only* consistent predictor of welfare stringency across the states (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011). Racial divisions pattern not only the design of cash relief programs, but also welfare attitudes (Gilens 1999), the experiences of welfare bureaucrats (Watkins-Hayes 2009), and local policy implementation (Schram et al. 2009).

Although racial divisions clearly pattern welfare policy today as they have historically, there is little consensus about the forces driving this relationship. During the 19th and early 20th century, social norms allowed politicians to vent racial animus openly (Mendelberg 2001). Lawmakers justified restrictive policies as necessary for the preservation of racially unequal political and economic arrangements (Fox 2012; Neubeck and Cazanave 2001). The explicit nature of these arguments has allowed scholars to trace the effects of racial divisions on early welfare state development with relative ease. In recent decades, however, the eschewal of *de jure* discrimination and a national embrace of the norm of racial equality have complicated this task. Late 20th century policies are race-neutral in their design, and racialized political discourse is often implicit (Bobo and Charles 2009). Racial divisions still have powerful political consequences, but the mechanisms driving this relationship are poorly understood.

This theoretical gap has not gone unnoticed by welfare state scholars. Historical studies identify a constellation of mechanisms through which race relations limited the development of a strong social safety net in the 1930s including the political power of southern elites (Katznelson 2005) and civil rights backlash (Quadagno 1996). Research on contemporary welfare policy outcomes offers a narrower set of theories which I term institutional, attitudinal, and cultural.

Institutional theories contend that racial divisions affect contemporary welfare policy through the structure of social programs. Assessing the role of race in three social programs, Lieberman (1998) asserted that the localized structure of cash welfare has made it vulnerable to racial exclusions while more centralized programs prevented the intrusion of racial bias. Proponents of this approach argue that race relations shape welfare policies and reinforce racial inequalities in the present day because of the embeddedness of race in welfare institutions.

Attitudinal approaches examine the role of racial attitudes in shaping policy opinions. This argument builds on works which demonstrates that White racial attitudes predict policy opinions, independent of other group interests (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000). Unlike institutional theories which generally rely on archival data and emphasize institutional features as causal forces, studies of racial attitudes use survey data to demonstrate how the stated racial preferences of individual Whites undermine public support for welfare. Gilens (2001), for example, found that the main source of White opposition to welfare is the perception that Blacks are lazy and that they use welfare to avoid work. Assuming that policy outcomes reflect public preferences (Brooks and Manza 2007), these studies infer that racial attitudes mediate the race-policy relationship.

Although racial attitudes reflect broader cultural narratives and schema, attitudinal accounts typically stress the causal influence of professed opinions without interrogating the

cultural origins of these attitudes or the discourses that make them relevant to policymaking. *Cultural* theories, however, privilege cognitive models of policy choice and assert that cultural schemas, not individual opinions, drive the race-policy relationship. Such accounts assert that perceptions are shaped by taken-for-granted classification schemes (DiMaggio 1997) and that classificatory systems direct policymaker preferences (Skrentny 2006; Steensland 2006) and public support for specific policies (Schneider and Ingram 1993). Hancock (2004) attributed the rise of punitive welfare reforms in the mid-1990s to stereotypes and judgments about welfare recipients. Soss, Fording, and Schram (2011) proposed a Racial Classification Model which asserts that racial divisions structure policies when racial categories are salient social classifications and in the presence of stereotype-consistent cues about racial minorities.

These theories provide useful insights into contemporary racial divisions and welfare policy outcomes. However, they are limited in their utility. While institutional theories demonstrate that political institutions differ in their susceptibility to racial bias, they treat racial inequalities as a historical legacy embodied in structures but not actively reproduced with shifting social relations. Attitudinal approaches highlight the salience of public opinion in democratic policymaking, but they view both public opinion and policy outcomes as an amalgam of individual attitudes rather than as collective products (Lee 2002). As a result, they neglect the fact that policy-making involves myriad actors whose influence varies depending on the stage of the process (Soule and King 2006). Cultural approaches are correct that racial categories must be salient to be politically influential; however, most applications of these theories assume that racial divisions are always politically salient in heterogeneous polities or undertheorize the processes by which racial categories become salient. Such accounts must be extended to explain

how racial meanings are collectively reproduced (Winant 2000) and the conditions under which these meanings alter policy outcomes.

A related shortcoming of these theories is that they analyze welfare policy as an independent domain, overlooking policy antecedents that might structure welfare debates. The assumption that intra-domain dynamics motivate policy decisions (Burstein 1991) may reflect scholarly specialization. Most researchers specialize in a particular policy domain (the welfare state, economic policy, etc). While they may recognize that external events can affect dynamics in a different policy domain, rarely are these spillover effects incorporated into theoretical models. This oversight is particularly noteworthy in scholarship on the race-policy relationship since extra-domain dynamics are likely to have a crucial effect on the political salience of race.

The Racialized Conflict Theory

I introduce a racialized conflict theory of policy development which reformulates these attitudinal, cultural, and political theories and integrates them into a single framework. This theory posits that policy decisions emerge in a larger socio-political context which has spillover effects on welfare politics. It also suggests that polities enact punitive welfare policies following the activation of a racialized conflict. Even when these conflicts are substantively unrelated to welfare, they structure the wider context in which welfare debates develop, altering public perceptions and demands about welfare, the political and organizational salience of race, and the calculus of lawmakers. I suggest that racialized conflicts mediate the relationship between ethno-racial demographics and social policy outcomes. That is, the likelihood of punitive reforms rises with Black population size not because of demographics per se but because the odds of a racialized conflict likely rise with increases in Black population size.

Sociologists have studied "racial conflicts" for decades, typically referring to civil rights protests and race riots. This research defines racial conflicts as deliberate attempts to rearrange the distribution of power, characterized by collective displays of anger and violence between racialized social groups (Himes 1971; Olzak and Shanahan 2003). I use the term somewhat differently. First, I refer to conflicts as "racialized" rather than "racial" to emphasize the constructed and contingent nature of race. [2] Second, I define racialized conflicts events of a series of events that draw boundaries based on perceived racial difference, polarize political groups along racial lines, and involve explicitly race-based claims.[3] These conflicts need not involve violence or protest; they may involve contestations over resources, cultural symbols, or other social arrangements (Morrill, Zald, and Rao 2003). In the sections that follow, I identify two racialized conflicts which exemplify this broader phenomenon: a Georgia fight about a cultural symbol (the state flag) and an Alabama debate about political access (voter identification). Third, while others treat racial conflicts as discrete events, racialized conflicts are protracted encounters in which individuals act as collective racial status groups (Weber 1996). Consequently, these conflicts are part of the broader process of "racial formation," the development, transformation, and destruction of racial categories (Omi and Winant 1994).

It is important to note that no conflict is inherently racialized. Conflicts become so when participants' primary justification for their position involves racialized claims or grievances. That said, some conflicts are likely more susceptible to racialization than others. In the United States, debates about voting rights and criminal justice have a long history of racialization,

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2 I use the "race" as "a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (Omi and Winant 1994, 55). Some support discarding the term "race" in sociological analysis (Loveman 1999). I use it because "race" offers purchase on issues of inequality and politics unavailable using the language of "ethnicity" (Hattam 2007). In using the term, however, I stress the processes of group formation and boundary-making which often go unidentified in race scholarship.

[3] Any group in the racialized conflict may initiate the use of race-based claims or grievances, whether it be Blacks or Latinos demanding equal access to public resources on the basis of race or, as I will show was the case in Georgia, Whites demanding the preservation of racially discriminatory cultural symbols in the face of Black opposition.

increasing the odds that contemporary conflicts about these issues would be fraught with racial tensions and discourse. While racialized conflicts have both historical and structural foundations, I am to highlight their policy spillover effects and, in the process, redirect existing thinking about the attitudinal, cultural, and political forces which structure the race-policy relationship. Below, I outline the key tenets of this theory with a focus on its attitudinal, cultural, and political dimensions (see Figure 1).

Attitudinal Dimension

The racialized conflict theory follows existing attitudinal models of welfare policy in asserting that public racial attitudes affect policy outcomes; however, it deviates from these theories in key respects. Researchers typically assume that racial attitudes affect policy even when they are latent, a supposition reflected in the use surveys to study the attitude-policy nexus. Surveys measure public attitudes whether or not respondents care to express those attitudes or hold actionable beliefs on a subject (Lee 2002). However, the racialized conflict theory holds that public opinions, including racial attitudes, affect policy outcomes only when *activated*; that is, when they are "both salient in the mind and impel one to political action" (Lee 2002, 31).

As Figure 1 shows, the first proposition of the racialized conflict theory is that racialized conflicts activate racial animus, compelling individuals to publicly express previously inert racial attitudes. Racialized conflicts affect welfare policymaking by activating two particular types of racial attitudes: racial threat and racial resentment. Racial threat theories suggest that the larger the proportion of minorities in a community the more Whites will feel threatened (Key 1984). At a deeper level, threat theories examine a group's emotional reaction to a (perceived) threat to their group position (Blumer 1958). This sense of threat racially structures welfare policy. As a

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racialized conflict erupts, it not only heightens the political salience of race, it generates a sense of racial threat and a concern about group position which extend beyond the immediate context of the initial racialized conflict. Racialized conflicts also activate racial resentments: stereotypes arising from the belief that a minority group is making excessive claims for public resources (Mendelberg 2001). These sentiments emerge from the racially-grounded claims made during racialized conflicts and from the racially fractured organizing that occurs during such conflicts.

As the arrows in Figure 1 illustrate, the racialized conflict theory posits that activated racial attitudes have both a direct effect on welfare policymaking and an indirect cultural effect. When constituents express racial animus to their elected officials and demand a response, they directly influence the political calculus of policymakers. Policy elites stand to gain politically if they use punitive welfare policies to appease racial threats and resentments. These racial attitudes become consequential for welfare policy when elections loom or in the final stages of bill passage when public opinion is most relevant to the policy process (Soule and King 2006). The racialized conflict theory holds that the relationship between attitudes and political outcomes is also mediated by culture, a process I outline below.

<Figure 1 about here>

Cultural Dimension

The attitudinal effects of race on policy have been widely studied, but less accounted for are the deep cultural effects of race on policy processes (Wheelock and Hartmann 2007). Racial categories are cultural categories (Steensland 2006), available to politicians as they "perform" politics, interpret issues, and construct policy alternatives (Alexander 2010; Burstein 1991). Existing cultural accounts stresses that racial divisions structure policy outcomes through their effects on cognitive schema. The racialized conflict theory locates the cultural effects of race in

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these moral categories and also in the broader cultural context in which policymaking occurs and the symbolic packaging or framing of welfare policy (Gamson 1992).[4]

The second central proposition of the racialized conflict theory, as Figure 1 shows, is that racialized conflicts have cultural effects, creating a racialized discursive opportunity structure, an "institutionally anchored way of thinking that provide[s] a gradient of relative political acceptability to specific packages of ideas" (Ferree 2003, 309). Discursively, racialized conflicts draw boundaries based on perceived racial differences (Barth 1969) and involve explicitly race-based claims. Thus, the collective actors in racialized conflicts employ racial categories to express their grievances and to specify solutions. When welfare debates arise following or in the midst of such conflicts, this context affects the causal story that emerges to explain and justify policy solutions (Gusfield 1984). Racialized interpretations about welfare dependency will gain more traction in a political environment rife with racial polarization than in one where racial priming has not occurred.

The racialized conflict theory posits, and Figure 1 demonstrates, that conflict-activated racial attitudes both have cultural and political effects. Constituents express threat and resentment using racial categories to denote moral worth. These racialized claims create a racialized discursive opportunity structure, priming policymakers to view welfare as a racialized issue. Policymakers also adopt these arguments to justify welfare interventions. Thus, while threat compels response from politicians, its mode of expression also spills over into the welfare, deepening the salience of race in welfare debates.

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[4] Soss, Fording, and Schram's racial classification model, for example, asserts that policy outcomes will be more punitive when policymakers' harbor racial stereotypes and when welfare recipients actually exhibit these characteristics. The racialized conflict theory holds that policymaker perceptions and cultural schema direct policy outcomes when conflicts become racialized, regardless of stereotype-consistent cues. For example, welfare recipient demographics and behaviors were virtually equal in Georgia and Alabama, but the states pursued different reforms. The racialized conflict theory suggests that the political manipulation of racial categories is a function not of actual beneficiary behaviors but of the prevailing political climate.

Racialized discourses also constrain the efforts of anti-poverty advocates to lobby for lenient reforms by limiting the resonance of non-racial framings of social problems. Just as a discursive opportunity structure can limit the salience of certain frames (McCammon et al. 2007), it can also divide likely allies by race, limiting the formation of effective broad-based coalitions for lenient reforms (Brown 2013). This argument does not preclude advocate influence on policy outcomes. Shifting configurations of stakeholders and on-going advocacy may allow for the active re-making of boundaries during welfare debates. However, as I show below, in both Georgia and Alabama the group boundaries drawn in prior debates or conflicts, by and large, determined the racialization of welfare politics and the appeal of punitive policies.

Political Dimension

The racialized conflict theory also holds that the attitudinal and cultural dimensions of racialized conflicts have political effects. They compel the passage of punitive welfare policies both by limiting the ability of anti-poverty groups to mobilize effectively and by altering the political calculus of policy elites (see Figure 1). In terms of advocacy, racialized conflicts stymie multi-racial coalition formation because they divide political groups along racial lines, often raising the risks of an alliance (Brown 2013). Equally important, political leaders stand to win electoral advantages or political concessions by exploiting the racial animus and discourses that emerge from racialized conflicts (Mendelberg 2001). This argument presupposes the existence of a democratic polity with competitive elections and extensive suffrage (Amenta and Halfmann 2000). Existing institutional and political theories assume that these features will compel the passage of more generous social policies because they enhance the political influence low-income voters. The racialized conflict theory, however, asserts that democratic elections are

susceptible to racial biases which can undermine support for such reforms. Furthermore, while prevailing theories assert that party organization affects the likelihood of expansive social reforms, the racialized conflict theory emphasizes that racialized conflicts exert pressures on politicians regardless of their party affiliation, prompting broad support for punitive reforms. After a racialized conflict, politicians must compete for votes from racially resentful and threatened voters. Punitive welfare reforms provide an opportunity to win these votes, particularly when the discursive opportunity structure categorizes racial minorities as undeserving or overly demanding.

To summarize, racialized conflicts spur the adoption of punitive welfare reforms through their attitudinal, cultural, and political spillover effects. As Figure 1 shows, racialized conflicts activate racial attitudes, particularly threat and resentment, encouraging racially resentful citizens to express their resentment in public and political venues. These activated attitudes have two subsequent spillover effects on welfare politics. The first is a direct effect on the political calculus of lawmakers. When threat and resentment are high, politicians stand to gain at the ballot box by passing punitive welfare reforms. One spillover effect of racialized conflicts, then, is to change the potential payoffs to adopting punitive welfare reforms. The second spillover effect is an indirect cultural effect. Resentful and threatened voters use racialized claims to express their viewpoints, creating racialized discursive opportunity structure which priming policymakers to view welfare as a racialized issue. Policymakers also adopt these narratives to justify welfare interventions. Because the actors in these conflicts express racialized grievances, they elevate the socio-political salience of racial categories in a polity. The narratives used in racialized conflicts also spillover into welfare reform debates. Together, these attitudinal and cultural spillover effects pressure lawmakers to support punitive reforms.

Study Design

In the sections that follow, I apply this theory to explain the divergent policy paths taken by Georgia and Alabama during the welfare reforms of the mid-1990s. Paired comparisons such as this have been a vital part of welfare state research, more so than in other subfields of sociology (see for example Heclo 1976; Lieberman 1998; Lieberman 2005; Orloff and Skocpol 1984; Pierson 1996; Reese 2005; Somers and Block 2005). As Amenta (2003) explains, welfare state research is particularly amenable to comparative analysis because there is general consensus among welfare state scholars about the dependent variable demanding explanation (the scope and generosity of inequality-reducing policies) and the theories worthy of appraisal. Comparative analyses have proven vital to the field precisely because they allow researchers to specify causal mechanisms and engage in theory-building while remaining attuned to the complexities of the policy process (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Ragin 1997). The use of negative or anomalous cases is critical in this regard. Existing research on race and contemporary policymaking relies heavily on positive cases, a strategy which leads to the development of biased theories. Focusing solely on cases which follow predicted trends limits efforts to separate out relevant processes, structures, and patterns (Emigh 1997). In the case of welfare state research, this approach has led to the misspecification of stereotypes and prejudice as driving forces in policy formation. Like all methods, paired case analysis has its limits in terms of generalizability, and these limits may be exaggerated by the small number of cases. The theory-generating goals of this article, however, are well-suited to a case study approach.

Welfare reform offers an ideal context for such a comparison. Not only was welfare reform the most significant welfare policy transformation since the 1960s, it also required all

fifty states to restructure their welfare policies at roughly the same time, creating a somewhat

controlled environment for policy analysis (Soss et al. 2001). Studies of these state-level

decisions indicate the profound influence of racial divisions on policy outcomes. The racial

composition of states and their caseloads proved the most powerful predictors of the critical

decisions facing the states: the strength of work requirements, the length of time limits, and the

stringency of sanctions (Fellowes and Rowe 2004; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011; Weaver and

Gais 2002).[5]

     I compare Georgia and Alabama's responses to this mandate because the states pursued

opposing approaches to these three reform decisions despite their racial, political, and economic

similarities. Georgia, which enacted its first reforms in 1994, adopted among the strictest

welfare programs in the country, placing a four year lifetime time limit on welfare receipt and

demanding immediate work participation from most welfare recipients. It also adopted a full-

family sanction, meaning that if a parent on the case violated a rule of welfare participation the

entire family's benefit would be cut. Post-reform, case workers banished entire families from the

rolls for minor offenses such as missing a parent-teacher conference or a doctor's appointment

(Ezzard 1997). In 1996, however, Alabama adopted the maximum time limit allowed by the

federal government (sixty months), sanctioned only the adults on a case if a violation occurred

(ensuring that children continued to receive their benefits even upon parental infractions) and

allowed participants twenty-four months on welfare before requiring work participation. With

the opportunity and the funds to do so, the state chose *not* to enforce strict standards for welfare

participation, despite its large Black population and predominantly Black welfare rolls. In this

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[5] Sanction policies outline the punishments welfare recipients receive for violating the terms of TANF participation. States can opt to gradually cut benefits, to cut only the adult portion of a benefit, or to cut off the entire family benefit. Work requirements detail how quickly a recipient must participate in work activities after enrolling in TANF. Time limits refer to lifetime TANF participation. Federal law limits lifetime benefits receipt to five years, but states can adopt shorter timelines.

sense, the comparison of Georgia and Alabama serves as a "critical experiment" to assess the relationship between racial demographics and contemporary welfare politics (Merton, 1970: 2l9).

Systematically comparing reform efforts in Alabama and Georgia offers important advantages in theorizing the race-policy relationship. Although no two states are identical, Georgia and Alabama shared many economic, social, and political characteristics known to influence social policy development. (See Table 1) These similarities allow me to isolate and specify the effect of racial divisions on policy development. At the economic level, formative theories of welfare state development assert that local labor market conditions exert important pressures on welfare policymaking. Strong economic conditions and a high demand for low-wage labor can lead to the adoption of punitive reforms (Fox 2012; Piven and Cloward 1979). At the same time, states may reduce benefits or tighten participation rules during fiscal crises (O'Connor 2001). Both Alabama and Georgia emerged rather quickly from the recession of the 1980s and were experiencing comparatively low unemployment rates (5%) in the mid-1990s. Each of these states had a poverty rate that hovered around 15% and budget surpluses of approximately 8% (Alabama) and 7% (Georgia). As a result, economic theories would have predicted similar policy outcomes in the two states. Higher out-of-wedlock birth rates and higher poverty rates both correlate with the adoption of punitive welfare policies (Hancock 2004; Soss et al. 2001), but these trends also cannot explain Georgia and Alabama's policy paths. The two states had identical non-marital birth rates (around 34%) and the poverty rate was higher in the lenient state.

<Table 1 about here>

Politically, the states were similar as well. Democrats controlled the legislature in both states, a factor usually correlated with more generous welfare policies. During welfare reform,

states with Republican governors were the most likely to adopt punitive welfare reforms (Zylan and Soule 2000); however, Georgia's Democratic Governor, Zell Miller led the charge for punitive reforms and Republican Governor Fob James mediated negotiations for the final more generous program in Alabama. While "embedded preferences" can explain much variation in welfare policy outcomes (Brooks and Manza 2007), public support for strict policies like two-year time limits were equally high in both states (around 80%). As I will elaborate on below, both states also had similar historical commitments to welfare-to-work programs and minimal protections for the poor.

These similarities only hint at sweeping parallels in the states' racial histories. Built on slave labor and racially-targeted exploitation, each state's historical reliance on intensive agriculture perpetuated a system of racial exclusion and generated high levels of White anxiety about Blacks. The Civil War left a profound legacy in each state, buttressing racial tensions and segregation. As is well-documented, Jim Crow laws instituted legal barriers to Black social and political participation (Bayor 2000). Rural White voters held immense sway in state politics due to legislative malapportionment (Mickey 2012). White political elites refused to appropriate funding for Black facilities which remained poorly equipped and politically ignored (Key 1984).

The states also witnessed similar patterns of cross-racial organizing from Reconstruction through the Civil Rights Movement. There was significant interracial organizing in specific occupational sectors in both Alabama and Georgia in the late 1800s and the first part of the 1900s. Alabama coal miners routinely organized across racial lines to protest the hiring of convict laborers, the use of strikebreakers, and the rise in contract workers (Alexander 2004; Letwin 1998). The Farmers' Alliance demonstrated brief successes at the same in Georgia during this time period (Gerteis 2007). Because segregationist practices held a tight grip over

both states, interracial organizing was typically passing and fraught with challenges, foundering once the march for political equality required social equality. By mid-century, interracial alliances were uncommon in both states and were met with staunch resistance and targeted violence when they did occur. Alabama and Georgia were the first two states in the country to witness a resurgence of Ku Klux Klan activity in the 1940s (Feldman 1997).

In both states, however, a genuine social movement emerged in the 1960s, and protesters were met with White violence and massive resistance (Jeffries 2009). Black political power increased in both states in the decades following the civil rights movement. Black representation both states' legislatures increased dramatically between the early 1970s and the 1990s (Menifield and Shaffer 2005). Both states established Black Legislative Caucuses in the 1970s which gained representation and influence in the latter years of the 20th century. Yet amidst these gains, residential and educational inequality proved intractable in the late 20th century. In the 1990s, Blacks comprised the majority of poor citizens and welfare beneficiaries in both states.

As this history suggests, the states' divergent welfare reform trajectories are not easily explained by institutional, attitudinal, or cognitive theories of race and the welfare state. The states had similar institutional structures and long-term commitments to a minimal welfare state. Racial divisions in the early 20th century prompted both to establish the stingiest social safety nets in the country (Neubeck and Cazanave 2001; Reese 2005). Offering negligible benefits and using racially-biased eligibility assessments, both were among the country's earliest adopters of work requirements and sought exceptions to federal welfare rules (known as "waivers") as the century progressed (Soule and Zylan 1997; Zylan and Soule 2000). (See Table 1) Residents of each state were equally skeptical of Black work ethic and interracial relationships in the early and mid-1990s. If anything Georgia residents harbored more liberal racial attitudes, given their

slightly higher support for racial integration. Furthermore, my content analysis of news stories

from each state (see below for details) found that stereotypes about welfare recipients were

equally dominant in both states, if not more prevalent in the lenient state than the punitive one.

As existing theories provide insufficient explanation for the Georgia-Alabama divergence, I now

assess these cases using the racialized conflict theory.

Data and Methods

      Applying the racialized conflict theory to these case studies required data that allowed me

to (1) observe dynamics between policy domains and (2) examine the attitudinal, cultural, and

political effects of racialized conflicts on welfare outcomes. This required a multiple method

approach with several data sources: media content analysis, archival data, public opinion poll

results, and in-depth interview data. Typically, mixed methods work this is either confirmatory

or complementary (Small 2011). The confirmatory approach, or triangulation, involves the

collection of multiple data types to measure the same outcome, ensuring that the strategy of data

collection does not bias results (Kadushin et al. 2008; King, Keohane, and Verba 1994).

Complementary approaches employ multiple data sources, using different methods to

compensate for the others' weaknesses (Small 2011). In this analysis, I use each approach for

different levels of analysis. Assessing each component of the theory (attitudinal, cultural, and

political) required a complementary approach. For example, while public opinion polls may

capture electoral trends, they cannot measure policy discourses. As a result, I selected different

data sources to assess each dimension. Parsing out the dynamics within each dimension required

triangulating data sources to identify similar results.

To identify which, if any, political conflicts had spillover effects on welfare debates, I used media content analysis and end-of-year news summaries published by major news sources. Both allowed me to measure policy context. I analyzed 500 randomly-sampled news stories from 1993-1997 published in the largest newspaper in each state: *The Birmingham News* and *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.[6] To create the sample, a research assistant and I searched for articles containing the term "welfare" in each state in each year. We then read each story and retained only those that used "welfare" to refer to means-tested assistance for low-income individuals and referred to the state in question. We sampled from the eligible stories so as to retain for analysis fifty stories per state per year. We did this by taking every N^{th} story, where N equaled the number of eligible stories that year divided by 50. We used Atlas.ti to code these stories, using paragraphs as the "quotation" (the term for unit of analysis in Atlas.ti).

To identify issues aligned with welfare policy debates in each state, I inductively generated codes for the non-welfare policy issues referenced in concert with welfare (e.g. the state budget, flag legislation, education policy, criminal justice reforms, etc). The intercoder agreement rate for these codes ranged from 82% to 100%, significantly higher than for similar studies (Hancock 2004). In addition to this news media content analysis, I collected end-of-year news summaries and reports from the three major newspapers in each state and examined coverage of "State of the State" addresses to identify whether any non-welfare-related policy debates repeatedly arose in the context of welfare discussions. Although issues like the state budget and education overlapped with welfare news coverage in both states, the content analysis results revealed a sharp contrast between the two states. As I will detail further in subsequent

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[6] As of the early 1990s, these papers had conservative to moderate political bents. Both endorsed Republican candidate George Bush in the 1992 presidential race (Associated Press 1992; Editorial 1992). The Birmingham paper was strongly influenced by Republican business interests (Feldman 2005) while a study of newspaper ideology rated the Atlanta paper as politically moderate (Ho and Quinn 2008).

sections, tort reforms repeatedly resurfaced in news coverage on Alabama's welfare reforms

while a flag change proposal reappeared in Georgia coverage.[7]

After completing this step, I tested the attitudinal component of the racialized conflict

theory: the activation of racial resentment and racial threat. Most theories of threat and

resentment assume that latent attitudes, revealed through surveys or demographic data, structure

policymaking. The racialized conflict theory asserts that these attitudes are most likely to affect

policy outcomes when racialized conflicts make them appear relevant to policy debates and

when constituents act upon these attitudes to make political claims. I collected data on both. To

measure public racial attitudes, I used data from the primary national survey used to assess

welfare-related attitudes (the American National Election Survey) and results from two regional

surveys from the Southern Focus Poll conducted by the Center for the Study of the American

South at UNC-Chapel Hill. To assess the effect of prevailing political debates on welfare I

collected data about the ongoing events that provided a context for welfare debates. The

archives consulted included the Alabama Department of Archives and History, the archives of

Alabama Arise (a major anti-poverty group), the Georgia State University Library Special

Collections, and the Georgia Archives. Because the media analysis identified tort reform and the

flag change as relevant policy domains for welfare politics, I examined files from welfare reform

committees and any collections indexed with the words "welfare reform," "tort reform" (in

Alabama), or "flag" (in Georgia). I also examined the policy files from the years immediately

preceding welfare reform (1990-1996) to confirm the significance of the tort reform and flag

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[7] Because Georgia began its welfare reforms in 1994 and Alabama in 1996, it is possible that federal crime debates in 1994 affected the racialization of welfare in Georgia but not Alabama. To test this hypothesis, I coded the news media dataset for references to crime policy. If welfare debates were more racialized in Georgia because of federal crime debates in 1994 we would see more references to crime policy in Georgia news reporting than in Alabama's. My results show that 2% of Georgia news paragraphs contained references to crime policy versus 1.6% in Alabama. This difference is small and statistically insignificant, suggesting that crime debates did not disproportionately influence Georgia's welfare reform process.

debates and to identify any additional political conflicts which preoccupied the states during that time. In total, I collected and analyzed over 1,500 pages of archival material.

To measure activated threat and resentment I triangulated archival, oral history, and interview data. To assess this activation among constituents I analyzed constituent letters to key public officials during the tort reform, flag, and welfare reform debates. Such letters do not provide a representative sample of public opinion, but they are useful for analyzing how mass public opinion becomes activated in the wake of major conflicts because they measure opinions like to affect future actions (Lee 2002). Furthermore, letter analysis allows me to assess not just attitude prevalence but of the language used to express these attitudes. I randomly sampled 120 letters about each issue from the relevant states, using Atlas.ti to code the documents. The methodological appendix contains the coding scheme used to identify threat and resentment. The racialized conflict theory receives empirical support to the extent that constituents and policy actors in Georgia expressed more activated racial threat and resentment than their counterparts in Alabama, despite similar levels of latent animus as evidenced by public opinion poll data.

These constituent letters demonstrate the extent to which state residents publicly expressed a sense of racial threat and resentment to political elites; however, they do not measure the prevalence of threat and resentment in elite discourse. To capture this, I examined internal government documents, news reporting on committee hearings, and available transcripts of speeches or legislative testimonies. While it would be ideal to conduct a comparative content analysis of materials across the two states, neither Georgia nor Alabama transcribed legislative committee hearings or testimonies at the time. Given these limitations, I engaged in a qualitative comparison of available materials at each archive. I triangulated these data sources with oral

histories and in-depth interviews with key players in each state's welfare reform efforts. During the mid-1990s, the Georgia Government Documentation Project at Georgia State University conducted oral histories with legislators and activists involved in welfare reform, flag, and other policy controversies. These oral histories, collected by archivists and political science faculty, focused on the tenor of and the role of racial divisions in these political debates, making them an ideal data source for tracking racial threat and resentment at the legislative level. Because no comparable oral histories existed in Alabama, I conducted in-depth interviews with the three political leaders who crafted Alabama's final reform plan and with the *Birmingham News* reporter charged with covering these final negotiations. In conducting these interviews I endeavored to replicate the question order and structure of the Georgia interviews as much as possible to ensure comparability. The racialized conflict theory received empirical support to the extent that policymakers expressed more racial threat and resentment in Georgia, the punitive state, than in Alabama.

The racialized conflict theory predicts that racial conflicts also have cultural effects. Prevailing cultural accounts of the race-policy relationship contend that racial divisions structure policy outcomes through cognitive schema, such as stereotypes of welfare recipients. The racialized conflict theory, on the other hand, suggests that racialized conflicts exert cultural effects on policymaking by encouraging the adoption of racialized discourse. To measure variation in welfare stereotyping prevalence and content in the two states I coded the news story dataset described above, employing a modified version Hancock's (2004) coding scheme for the public identity of the welfare queen. Results revealed higher levels of welfare stereotyping in the more lenient state, Alabama, suggesting that existing cognitive theories cannot adequately explain these policy outcomes.

To assess the cultural component of the racialized conflict theory required data on the narratives used in policy debates. I used news media content analysis and archival data to assess the prevalence of explicitly racialized framings of social problems in the two states. First, I conducted additional news media content analysis, creating five codes that mirror the ethno-racial categories on the U.S. Census: *White*, *Black*, *Asian*, *Hispanic*, and *Native American*. Each paragraph that received a racial code also received a time reference code (*contemporary* or *historical*), depending on whether the speaker used the racial reference to explain to contemporaneous events or events that happened before 1990. I used these codes to assess whether public actors were using racialized discourses to describe contemporary political events. Second, I used these same codes to analyze the archival data. Doing so allowed me to trace the entry and evolution of racial and non-racial welfare discourses in both the political debates that preceded welfare reform and in welfare debates. The racialized conflict theory received empirical support to the extent that (1) explicit racialized discourse was employed during preceding political conflicts in Georgia but not Alabama, (2) Georgia lawmakers employed similar racialized policy justifications during the flag controversy and during welfare reform, and (3) Alabama lawmakers did not employ racialized justifications for welfare. My analysis gave most weight to transcripts of legislative testimonies, committee meeting minutes, speeches, press releases, and campaign materials since these are the archival materials most likely to be representative, credible, and accurate accounts of policymaking discourse in action (Scott 1990). Documents of questionable origin or authenticity were checked for validity against other historical, newspaper, or interview sources and disregarded in the absence of external validation (Mariampolski and Hughes 1978).

Finally, I sought to assess the political consequences of racialized conflicts, particularly their effect on electoral politics. The racialized conflict theory asserts that racialized conflicts ultimately press elected officials to appeal to racially resentful voters. To measure the effects of threat/resentment and racialized discourse on electoral politics I turned to public approval ratings of the governors grappling with welfare reform. For each state I used data from most regularly conducted public opinion polls: the Georgia State Poll and Alabama's Capstone Poll. Conducted semi-annually by the Survey Research Center at the University of Georgia, the Georgia State Poll surveyed approximately 500 state residents each spring and fall. From 1992 to 1997, each survey instrument asked respondents whether they approved or disapproved of the governor's performance. Alabama's Capstone Poll, administered by the Institute for Social Science Research at the University of Alabama, asked respondents to rate the current governor's performance on a scale of 1 to 4. Like the Georgia poll, it was a semi-annual survey conducted each spring and fall with a sample size of approximately 500. These public opinion polls allowed me to trace trends in approval ratings over time and map how approval ratings shifted in response to changes in racialized political discourse or welfare politics. I also consulted news media reports on political campaigns and archival materials, particularly internal communications between gubernatorial staffers and between governors and constituents. Tracing the evolution of these communications over time allowed me to identify how incumbent governors altered their positions on welfare as the prevailing debates about tort reform and the flag unfolded. The racialized conflict theory garnered support if (1) Georgia but not Alabama policymakers expressed a need to adopt punitive reforms to appease resentful voters, if (2) policy elite communications about welfare shifted in response to racialized conflicts, and if (3) public support for candidates increased with the adoption of punitive reforms.

This multi-method research strategy allowed me to craft a detailed history of the evolution of welfare reform debates and the effect of prevailing non-welfare conflicts on welfare policies. It also permitted rigorous testing and the application of the racialized conflict theory to each case study. This goal is further achieved by comparing the two case studies to one another. By weighing the two case studies against one another during each step of analysis, the research design not only highlights the effect of racialized conflicts on welfare policy, it illuminates the forces can which structure welfare policymaking in the absence of such conflicts.

Georgia's Punitive Reforms

Georgia's welfare reforms followed a long history of stringent social policies. In the 1950s, long before the federal government mandated such measures, the state sought to purge of its welfare rolls by cutting benefits and implementing work requirements. In subsequent years, politicians steadfastly refused to raise benefit levels beyond a paltry minimum. When the first Bush administration permitted states to experiment with work programs, Georgia implemented its Positive Employment and Community Help Program (PEACH), a job training and placement program for AFDC recipients. Despite some positive reports of its effectiveness, the localized program never met demands. By the early 1990s, the state boasted the 46th lowest AFDC benefit in the country with little demand to improve conditions for poor families.

The prelude to Georgia's reform efforts began with the 1991 election of Governor Zell Miller, a White Democrat who declared the fight against racism a top priority (Orrock 1993). On May 29, 1992, more than one year into his term, embarked on a campaign to remove the Confederate emblem from the state flag. With the Atlanta Olympics looming, Miller feared the symbol would undermine the lucrative business opportunities that typically blessed host cities.

For six years the Georgia NAACP had advocated a new flag, but it was not until Miller embraced the cause that the flag skyrocketed up the state political agenda (Reingold and Wike 1998). What ensued was a statewide racialized conflict which spilled over into later welfare reform debates.

Before the flag controversy erupted, state residents and political leaders were not embroiled in a racialized conflict. The main issue on the state agenda in 1990-1991 was Governor Miller's proposal to implement a state lottery which would, by law, fund education programs in the state (Miller 1998). Lottery debates were highly contentious, but the battle lines were not racialized. Religious organizations were the primary opponents of the proposal, protesting the lottery on moral grounds. Their advocacy efforts clashed with those of educators who coveted the proceeds their schools would receive from the lottery (Cook 2010; Hyatt 1997). Debates about the lottery thus focused not on race but on moral imperatives, either to prohibit gambling or to educate the state's youngest citizens.

When the flag conflict erupted, it activated the salience of racial divides in state politics. Indeed, the flag controversy, unlike the lottery proposal, racially-tinged from its earliest days (Fleischmann and Pierannunzi 2007; Reingold and Wike 1998). The most vocal proponents of the flag change were Georgia's civil rights organizations: the NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus (GLBC). Leaders from these groups flanked Miller at public events and conducted a statewide organizing campaign. Harkening Georgia's history of racial oppression, Miller called changing the flag an act which would "give bigotry no sanction and persecution no assistance" (Foskett 1994). These efforts enraged many White residents and policymakers. Polls indicate that attitudes about the flag change were racially divided. An overwhelming 81% of Whites did not want to see the flag

go while the majority of Black residents supported the change (Atlanta Journal-Constitution 1992).

The opposition appeared indomitable, but Miller strengthened his campaign over the next two years, appearing on nationally syndicated talk shows to condemn the flag as a symbol of racial oppression. In one of the tensest moments of the conflict, a group of Black student activists burned the flag on the steps of the state capitol. As images of the flames inundated the news, anger swelled among the state's White residents, much of it directed toward Black advocacy groups. Ultimately, opposition to the flag change was so strong that the proposal never came up for a vote, and Miller abandoned his effort to change the flag.

Activated Attitude Effects

Although external to the welfare policy domain, the flag conflict had attitudinal, cultural, and political spillover effects on welfare reform. First, as predicted by the racialized conflict theory, the flag controversy activated racial attitudes, particularly threat and resentment. Even before the flag conflict, most Georgians expressed conservative racial attitudes when prompted in surveys. Public opinion polls show that in 1991 less than 50% felt that racial integration was a net positive for the region and 40% still favored some form of segregation (Atlanta Journal-Constitution 1992). The flag conflict activated this animus, compelling White residents to write to the governor in droves to express their sense of threat and their resentment toward Blacks. Reports from the time indicate that constituent calls flooded into legislative offices with voters advocating for the old flag at a 5:1 rate (Hyatt 1997). From 1992 to 1993, thousands of letters about the flag also poured into government offices.[8] Of the sample coded, 90% of constituents

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[8] The Governor's Office does not keep official counts of constituent letters. Estimates by archivists place the count of flag letters at over 5,000, significantly more than for most other issues broached during Miller's tenure.

opposed the change. Approximately half expressed racial threat or resentment, asserting that

Blacks were gaining more privileges than Whites or that Black interest groups controlled

Miller's agenda at the expense of White residents. They accused Miller of "succumbing" to the

NAACP, "kissing the ass" of Black voters, or "selling his soul" to Black interest groups. The

following quote from a constituent letter illustrates this activated group threat:

> Congratulations, Governor, you have singlehandedly undone years of racial
> harmony with your efforts… The demands of your special interest groups will not
> end with the replacement of my flag. They will also set out to destroy our history,
> traditions, and heritage… (Constituent J 1993)

While the above quote demonstrates racial threat, the following indicates racial resentment:

> I just saw the Negroes burning our GA Flag on TV… The more you honor their
> wishes the more they demand… They have more rights now than the Whites.
> We are being discriminated against but we … don't have the money or time to do
> protesting. (Constituent A 1992)

Voicing both resentment and threat, another constituent wrote:

> Governor Miller I voted for you and thought you would be a good Governor, but I
> will not vote for you again... Don't White people have some rights here? We
> have given Blacks everything they ask for… White people do not discriminate
> against the Blacks. It is the Blacks that are discriminating against the White
> people… People give blacks 99% of the pie. But they want all of it and half is
> mine, too. (Constituent E 1993)

These constituents directly connected their racial animus to Miller's electoral hopes,

demonstrating declining support for the governor. Public opinion polls mirrored this trend (see

Figure 2). During the flag controversy, Miller watched his approval ratings plummet. Communications with constituents clearly signaled that voters were ready and waiting to express their racial threat and resentments by deposing Miller at the polls.

Letter writers not only threatened Miller's political future, they suggested stringent welfare policies as a possible means of regaining their votes. Even before welfare reform surfaced on the national agenda, White heritage groups and their supporters urged Miller to restructure welfare instead of change the flag. "There are more pressing problems in this state than the Flag," wrote one White resident. "How about establishing some proper priorities… [like] Crime [or] Welfare Reform," (Constituent G 1993). Another stated, "I demand that you quit playing politician with our beloved flag… and get on with more important tasks such as encouraging the welfare malingerers to get a job" (Constituent D nd).

Interviews with legislative leadership indicate that constituents were not the only Georgians voicing racial animus. Recounting heated arguments in the capitol, Assemblywoman Nan Orrock said in an interview,

> In a very real way a racist ideology… prevailed. You can talk about the strategy
> and the tactics and how another approach might have garnered more votes, and
> that sort of thing… the bottom line is the… views held by whites that blacks get
> too much already, we're tired of giving in. I heard legislators say, [mocking],
> "Hell, I'm tired of giving. We gave enough already… I've given 'til I've done
> give out. I ain't giving no more'… seeing [support for the flag change] as caving
> in to black demands (Orrock 1993).

In a state where white voters viewed the NAACP and other Black advocacy groups as overly demanding rabble-rousers, flag activism by these groups ignited a sense of threat among white

residents stirred up racial resentments among white voters and policy elites who feared that Blacks were gaining too much political power. Given this highly racialized environment, politicians embarked on welfare reform primed to interpret Black welfare advocacy or policies to support a majority-Black welfare recipient population as politically risky. As I will show, legislative leaders and Governor Miller were acutely aware of these activated opinions and felt pressure to appease the state's resentful White voters to ensure their own political futures.

Cultural Spillover Effects

The flag conflict had cultural as well as attitudinal effects on Georgia's welfare trajectory. First, media analysis indicates that the flag issue resurfaced regularly during welfare reform debates. Two percent of all Georgia news paragraphs about welfare (approximately one in every four news stories) referenced the flag debate. Second, the flag controversy had a direct cultural effect, creating a racialized discursive opportunity structure for welfare reform debates. Because of the flag conflict, welfare reform emerged at time when racial categories were important indicators of moral worth and deservingness in Georgia. Finally, the language used to give voice to flag-activated threat and resentment became the same language used to frame calls for punitive welfare reforms.

Racialized discourse was evident from the earliest stages of the flag controversy. Leaders on both sides of the conflict used racial references to advance their cause. Change proponents argued, for example, that "The present Georgia Flag represents the darkest era of Georgia history which glorified slavery and human oppression." (Holmes 1997). Opponents accused Miller of "reverse discrimination" (Constituent K 1992).   They also framed broader social problems in terms of Black work ethic. As one constituent wrote, "Mr. Governor, there wouldn't be any of

these problems if we would've picked our own cotton… [Blacks] are just as good as everybody else to go work for what they want" (Constituent B 1993). Thus, while supporters identified the flag change as progress away from the state's racist history, opponents structured their claims around "fixing" Black work ethic and ignoring Black political demands.

These racial references spilled over into welfare reform debates. Perhaps the starkest measure of the racialization of welfare in Georgia emerges from my news media content analysis. Nearly seven percent of Georgia news paragraphs employed a racial category or reference in their reporting on welfare. This amounts to nearly one reference per story. Of these, a full 90% were references to contemporary racial issues. As I show in subsequent sections, this reliance on racial categories in Georgia poses a stark contrast to Alabama where a substantial number of racialized welfare references referred to historical events rather than contemporary politics.

The racialized framing of flag-activated threats and resentment also carried over into welfare. State legislators adopted the same racialized arguments used in the flag controversy to push for limitations on welfare benefits, framing welfare in terms of Black work ethic and political demands. Asserted one welfare opponent, "current welfare policy fosters dependency and [cripples] poor blacks" (Serb 1993). Responding to the flag change narratives that demonized Blacks as irresponsible and overly demanding, Miller informed the legislature that welfare reform "would restore the values of personal responsibility to the [welfare] system" and ensure that "able-bodied welfare recipients, who can work, should work." Miller also explicitly championed his leadership skills and distanced himself from the flag debacle by touting his ability to fight the "special interest groups" who pushed for the flag change (Miller 1993c).

Given the racialized narratives that prevailed in welfare debates it is perhaps unsurprising that observers routinely cited racial divides in the state legislature. The local reporter who covered the capitol beat explained that welfare reform years were "unusually divisive and contentious... with broad disagreement between white and black legislators over how to reform welfare" (Foskett 1995). Signaling the racial tenor of floor debates, Representative Larry Walker said that he "never remembered a session where race was such a beginning and ending point of everything… the leadership from across the state, black and White, [had fanned] the flames of polarization…" (Orrock 1993).

As central participants in the flag controversy, Black advocacy groups were mobilized and prepared to extend their advocacy efforts into welfare politics. Having participated in a successful multi-racial coalition for welfare reform the previous decade, they also had significant experience in anti-poverty politics. However, the flag controversy ensured that these organizations had few partners in their quest. Due to flag-activated racial animus and Miller's ultimate retreat on the flag, Black advocacy groups entered welfare reform isolated from likely allies wanting to separate themselves from maligned Black interest groups. The National Organization for Women and Georgians for Children had previously worked with Black groups to advocate for expansive reforms, but this time pursued their welfare advocacy independently (National Organization for Women 1997). Expressing what he felt was abandonment by White leaders, GLBC leader Billy McKinney announced to Governor Miller, "we were hoodwinked, hogtied, and screwed in the process" as previous allies temporarily shed their ties to the state's Black organizations (McKinney 1997). As the Alabama history will show, this racialization of welfare was not an inevitable response welfare reform. Rather, the flag controversy created a

racial discursive opportunity structure wherein racial framings of poverty were highly resonant and politically valuable for those seeking reelection.

Political Spillover Effects

The attitudinal and cultural components of the flag conflict created political advantages to passing punitive welfare policies. Miller's political standing evidences these trends. During the flag controversy, Miller's approval ratings dropped dramatically. By 1993, only 28% of registered voters said that they would cast a vote for Miller in the upcoming election, with White rural voters (a key constituency) voicing clear disapproval of Miller's governorship (Atlanta Journal-Constitution 1993). Public opinion polls, news reports, and constituent letters demanding Miller's resignation sent a clear message the flag controversy had threatened his re-election chances. Summarizing Miller's political future, Representative Tyrone Brook warned, "The flag issue is the highest negative he faces. If he continues to talk about the flag, he will not get re-elected" (Smith 1993b). In 1993, Miller abandoned his efforts to change the flag and shifted his focus to welfare reform which proved a politically convenient way to appeal to White resentment and threat, exploit prevailing racial discourses, and resurrect his political career.

Although Miller never discussed welfare prior to the flag controversy, he increasingly turned to poverty politics to improve his political image. Miller's evolving reply letters to constituents during the flag controversy evidence his gradual embrace of punitive welfare reforms. In 1992, when Miller first responded to flag change opponents, he argued that the flag change was a prerequisite to addressing other issues:

> There are many more important issues which we must face in order to meet the
> challenges of the future. Crime, teenage pregnancy, infant mortality... I support

changing the flag so we may get this divisive issue behind us and begin dealing

with the many more important issues facing our state (Miller 1992).

By early 1993, when he stepped up his flag campaign, Miller altered his responses with blatant references to racial injustice: "it is very clear that the flag was adopted in opposition to integration, and I believe it is the time to put it behind us" (Miller 1993a). When the flag change failure was imminent, Miller changed his letters yet again and specifically cited welfare reform as a key issue, claiming it was and had always been a centerpiece of his agenda: "... I found that the discussion of the flag was overshadowing my other proposals, such as the expenditure of lottery funds for new education programs, welfare reform… and anti-crime measures" (Miller 1993d). Finally, the last set of letters from Miller to constituents constituted a complete reversal from the 1992 letters. He stated, "I don't intend to pursue the change in the Georgia flag. There are more important things like welfare reform [to focus on]" (Smith 1993b).

Miller first introduced welfare reform measures in the state legislature in 1993. Prior to that point, Miller had appointed a Welfare Reform Task Force to research various alternatives for welfare reform in the state. Composed of 17 businessmen, state legislators, and advocates, the Task Force recommended that the governor eschew the more punitive work requirements, time limits, and sanctions proposed in other states and instead adopt an approach to welfare reform that emphasized work supports and education. Faced with dwindling poll numbers and threatening letters from constituents about the flag controversy, Miller dropped the recommendations of his self-appointed Task Force and proposed a bill which required that welfare recipients work as soon as possible after receiving welfare and face dire sanctions, including a termination of benefits, if they failed to meet requirements.

Not only did punitive welfare policies respond to constituent demands to make Black "welfare malingerers" work (Constituent D nd), the reform proposals allowed Miller to extract himself from Black interest groups. Once Miller's ally, the GLBC became his fiercest opponent during welfare reform. The committee charged with Miller's bill was chaired by the head of the GLBC, Georgeanna Sinkfield. Refusing to release it for a vote, the GLBC argued that families "take different amounts of time to overcome the barriers to work or self-sufficiency. [Miller's bill] unnecessarily risk[s] these families and their children being placed in jeopardy" (Holmes 1997). In response, Miller preyed on the racialized arguments from the flag controversy, imploring politicians to support his bill, "held captive" in committee "by a leadership who cannot grasp the concept that welfare demands the same level of responsibility that it requires from the tax payers" (Miller 1993b, 1). In ridiculing the "leadership" of the committee, Miller was outwardly criticizing a Black woman in a politically powerful position and speaking to white voters threatened by rising Black political influence. The GLBC leadership prevented the initial bill from ever leaving committee, and it only reached the floor of the legislature as a senate bill floor substitute. At that point, most white legislators, primed by racial resentment and a racialized political climate, supported its passage (Orrock 1993). On the second to last day of that legislative session, Miller threatened to call a special session to ensure the bill landed on his desk. The bill passed in the final hour of the session and was implemented in 1994.[9]

Miller's push for punitive reforms was politically successful, revitalizing his political career. While the flag controversy pulled Miller's approval ratings to an all-time low, the passage of this welfare reform bill sent them in the opposite direction (See Figure 2). In 1994,

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[9] The welfare reform debates in Georgia continued over the next four years following the first efforts in 1997. During this time, the legislature tightened sanctions and imposed a four year lifetime time limit on welfare assistance, one year less than required by the federal government. Additional information and analysis of these debates and events is available upon request.

the initial measures went into effect and Miller cajoled the legislature into passing even more

punitive reforms. According to reporters, Miller "received the most enthusiastic applause [on the

campaign trail] when he touted his controversial welfare reform plan" (Smith 1993a). After he

won his re-election bid, Miller adopted an even more punitive stance on welfare. Over the

course of the next three years his approval ratings shot up to over 70% as he passed the most

punitive welfare reforms in the country (Applied Research Center 1997). Black political leaders

accused Miller of "subliminal race-coding" and of using welfare reform to fuel racial tensions

(McKinney 1997). By the end of his campaign, Miller had alienated many of his Black

supporters who committed themselves to challenging his anti-welfare agenda. However, while

Mendelberg (2001) predicts such accusations would lower support for punitive welfare reform

policies, these race-baiting charges fueled racial politicking in the state and incentivized the

passage of punitive welfare policies.

<Figure 2 about here>

The Georgia case reveals the implications of racialized conflicts for welfare

policymaking. The activation of a racialized conflict just prior to the passage of federal welfare

reforms incited racial tensions in the state, leading many White citizens to demand policy action

to control a Black population perceived as deviant. The flag controversy also created a racial

discursive opportunity structure which anti-welfare coalitions and a struggling governor

exploited for political gain. This case offers empirical support for the racialized conflict theory.

But if states are likely to pursue stringent reforms in the aftermath of a racialized political

conflict, the lack of such a conflict should forestall the racialization of welfare, limiting the

appeal of punitive reforms. In the next section, I demonstrate how this sequence unfolded in

Alabama.

Alabama's Lenient Reforms

Like Georgia, Alabama confronted the federal welfare reform mandate having encountered significant reproach for its minimalist commitment to anti-poverty protections. Alabama spent the 1950s enforcing work requirements and used the waiver opportunities of the 1980s to adopt new electronic benefits tracking systems to monitor recipient behaviors and reduce waste and fraud. Recent efforts to expand the state safety net barely got off the ground, and Alabama's stingy social policies provided only a modicum of support for the state's poor population. As of 1990, the state offered the second lowest AFDC benefit in the country, an average of just $164 per month, and state elected officials showed little inclination toward change. Despite this shared history with Georgia, Alabama lawmakers pursued a highly unanticipated course of action during welfare reform, eschewing the opportunity to enforce even stricter requirements, ultimately raising the state's benefit amounts.

Alabama's welfare reforms were predated not by a racialized conflict but by a protracted battle over the civil justice system. In the late 1980s, Alabama was one of 42 states to enact tort reform legislation, placing caps on punitive damage awards (Stewart 1998). While such reforms limited medical malpractice suits and tempered skyrocketing insurance costs in other states, the Alabama Supreme Court voided the measures. The ruling caused a spike in multi-million dollar verdicts in the state. Some awards reached as high as $60 million dollars, a pattern "unparalleled in the history of American jurisprudence" (LeBlond 2007). In a case which thrust Alabama into the national spotlight, a Jefferson County court ordered that BMW pay a Birmingham doctor $2 million in damages because of a bad paint job. In another settlement, plaintiffs in a small town case won a $10 million settlement over a $1500 fee dispute. These outlandish settlements

prompted the *Wall Street Journal* to christen Alabama "the Land of Lawsuits" and *Forbes Magazine* to label the state "Tort Hell" (Noe 1997). As the movement for tort reform gained steam, Alabama became the public face of a national punitive damages controversy. Portrayed by the media as an embarrassment, Alabamians and their elected leaders sought to pass comprehensive tort reform. As I show below, the tort reform controversy was in no way a racialized conflict. I present the tort spillover effects in three sections, corresponding to the three dimensions of the racialized conflict theory: attitudes, culture, and political pressures.

Activated Attitudes

Tort reform discussions proved extremely divisive in the years leading up to welfare reform, but they did not activate racial animus as the flag controversy had in Georgia. Although the majority of flag letters in Georgia demonstrated activated threat or resentment, not one constituent letter about Alabama's tort reform debates voiced such sentiments. As was true in Georgia, the majority of Alabamians harbored inert racial animus and doubted the work ethic of Blacks (see Table 1), but the tort reform controversy did not activate these attitudes. As I show below, in the absence of activated racial animus, policymakers had little political incentive to exploit racial resentment or threat.

Rather than pit racial groups against each other, the tort reform debate pitted big business interests against trial lawyers and, to a lesser, extent consumer groups, smaller businesses, and civil justice advocates, with each side demonizing the other. Trial lawyers attempted to stoke public resentment against large corporations, asserting that large punitive damage awards protected individual Alabamians from big corporations. They declared a "crisis" in Alabama's justice system and feared tort reform would limit the liability of a few large and dishonest

corporations (Pratt 1997). The Alabama Trial Lawyers Association argued that "the proponents

of [reform] legislation don't have the best interests of the majority of Alabamians at heart...

corporate interests should not outweigh human interests" (Gilbert 1997).

Businesses, on the other hand, attempted to inflame a sense of economic threat and

resentment towards lawyers. Republican Governor Fob James claimed that punitive damages

harmed the state's image and its economy, forcing employers and jobs out of the state. One

prominent state legislative candidate claimed, "Such court decisions hurt business and cost

Alabamians jobs while the main benefactor is some trial lawyer who literally becomes a

multimillionaire overnight" (Bailey 1994). Although there were many indications that the state

was booming economically, media reports reinforced this vision, arguing that the risk of

excessive damage awards drove businesses from the state and fueled widespread job losses. A

1996 editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* even claimed that the state's failure to enact tort reform

was "tantamount to placing giant 'Keep Out' signs at the [Alabama] borders" (Editorial 1996b).

The opposing tort reform camps were also not divided along racial lines. Black leaders in

the state generally favored tort reform and used their votes to secure concessions on other issues;

however, tort reform itself was not their major concern and a number of key Black leaders

opposed the reforms (Editorial 1996a). If the flag conflict in Georgia polarized the legislature

along racial lines (Orrock 1993), few such divisions arose during tort reform. As subsequent

sections will show, later advocates for punitive welfare reforms attempted to racialized welfare

reform, both by deriding Black Alabamians and by challenging the integrity of Black lawmakers,

but these attempts largely failed in the absence of pre-existing race-based mobilization and

activated racial animus.

Cultural Effects

The tort reform conflict also failed to trigger the racialized cultural spillover effects that result from a racialized conflict. It neither heightened the salience of racial categories in the state political field and nor created a racialized discursive opportunity structure. Unlike in Georgia where the flag controversy created a racialized discursive opportunity structure, the lack of a racialized conflict in Alabama allowed advocates to construct non-racialized framings of welfare. Indeed, the discursive opportunity structure presented by tort reform allowed anti-poverty advocates to achieve greater political successes than they had in the past.

Newspaper content analysis demonstrates that tort reform reappeared in welfare debates in Alabama with close to 15% of all welfare stories making reference to tort reform. They also reveal starkly different patterns in the use of racial categories in welfare reporting in the states. Just four percent of Alabama welfare paragraphs employed a racial reference versus seven percent in Georgia. More importantly, when welfare news reports in Alabama referenced Blacks, only 60% of those references were to contemporary welfare politics versus 90% in Georgia. These differences suggest a sharp contrast in the racialization of welfare.

The racialized framing of the flag change campaign carried over into Georgia's welfare debates, but the lack of racial animus activated during tort reform stymied the efforts of Alabama politicians to effectively employ racialized anti-welfare language. Anti-welfare stereotypes were as strong in Alabama as in Georgia, if not more so. In fact, my content analysis revealed a higher prevalence of welfare stereotypes in Alabama (26% of news paragraphs) than in Georgia (22%). Interviews, media reports, and archival materials confirm that the commission's meetings were rife with implicitly racialized slander about welfare recipients. Epitomizing racialized stereotypes of welfare recipients (Hancock 2004), the head of the state's Department

of Human Resources Martha Nachman, caricatured them as "15 year-old[s] pregnant with the third kid and addicted to crack" (Forrister 2009). Other representatives from the Department of Human Resources went so far as to say that rather than use federal funds to help welfare recipients they would "kick 'em in the ass" (Sanders 2009). With these arguments, lawmakers sought to activate the racial subtext of welfare by arguing that recipients were "Blacks [who were] just sucking at the government's breast" (Sznajderman 2009).

The lack of a preceding racialized conflict did not prevent Alabama politicians from using these narratives, but it did limit their success. Despite these attempts to racialize welfare discussions, such efforts never captured the public's attention. Because racial divisions had not been primed by a prior conflict, they carried less political salience at this particular historical moment in Alabama. It proved challenging for political elites to activate racial resentments or threats. While public welfare discourse in Georgia was highly racialized, as evidenced by constituent letters and newspaper coverage, archival records show that very few Alabamians wrote to their elected officials about welfare. Those who did write to the Governor about welfare did not state a policy opinion but turned in acquaintances for welfare fraud (James 1995).

Researchers have identified multiple non-racial frames used to justify welfare expansion or to counter welfare retrenchment (Fujiwara 2005; Misra, Moller, and Karides 2003). The absence of activated racial attitudes in Alabama opened the doors for activists to exploit non-racialized and classed welfare arguments. Welfare advocates seized on the discursive opportunity presented by tort reform to win support for lenient welfare measures. Tort reformers on both sides had signaled the moral rightness of their position by identifying working class and low-income Alabamians as deserving citizens. For example, pro-tort reformers stressed the economic hardship faced by Alabamians who lost their jobs because the state's poor business

image forced jobs and companies to leave. Their opponents claimed that punitive awards were a matter of basic human decency, the one chance for struggling citizens to get what was rightfully theirs. The narratives used in the tort reform debate also criticized class inequalities in the state. While trial lawyers claimed that big corporations wanted tort reform so they could commit wrongdoings while maximizing profits, business groups claimed that already-rich trial lawyers were the only winners from damage awards. Thus, no matter which voice Alabamians heard, they heard a similar message: Alabamians were the victims not only of limited job growth but of a class-system which privileged the already privileged and abandoned everyday residents.

As welfare reform arose, this discursive opportunity structure provided great fodder for advocacy groups and political figures seeking supportive reforms. While the flag controversy in Georgia fractured what had been a powerful cross-racial pro-welfare lobby in the previous decade, tort reform provided a unique opportunity for Alabama welfare advocates. Since 1986, a multiracial coalition of 95 different religious and community organizations had advocated for supportive anti-poverty polices in Alabama. Called Alabama Arise, the group faced sizable obstacles in its efforts. Led by Director Kimble Forrister, these advocates and their allies in the state legislature joined forces to capitalize on the discursive opening created by tort reform. Across the state, advocates for lenient reforms adopted one unified narrative for their lobbying efforts: "jobs, child care, and transportation" (Forrister 2009). Because tort reformers emphasized the state's weak economy and limited development, anti-poverty arguments about the lack of economic opportunities for low-income families had great resonance among Alabama's citizens and lawmakers. Alabama Arise and its member organizations lobbied for supportive programs in these arenas while also combating attempts to pass restrictive time limits, work requirements, and sanctions for non-compliance (Alabama Arise 1997).

Anti-poverty groups also emphasized the measly allowances received by the state's welfare recipients, a message which exploited the discursive opportunities created by tort reform (Alabama Arise 1995). The average monthly benefit amount for a family on welfare totaled a mere $164 in Alabama. The increase awarded for an additional child was a paltry $28 per month. While politicians sought to convince Alabamians that welfare recipients were scamming the system by having additional children, $164 was negligible in comparison to the multi-million dollar damage awards reported on the news. Indeed, if Alabamians were the victims of a flawed tort system, certainly punitive welfare reforms would do little to resolve broader inequalities in the state. Over time, members of the welfare reform commission even came to champion tort reform as the job creation mechanism that would amend the flaws in the welfare system. Tort reform, they argued, would promote the necessary economic expansion to provide jobs for welfare recipients (Forrister 1997). At the same time, as multiple interviewees informed me, a handful of Republican lawmakers asserted that lenient welfare reforms were necessary in the absence of tort reform. Small businesses faced unencumbered lawsuits which prevented them from hiring any welfare recipients kicked off the rolls by punitive reforms (Forrister 2009; Sznajderman 2009). Thus, while tort reform did not constitute a racialized conflict, it had clear spillover effects on welfare reform. Its limited racialization opened the door for advocates to craft and disseminate an alternative explanation for welfare participation, and its prominence on the state political agenda helped to structure policymakers' interpretations of welfare reform.

Political Effects

While the attitudinal and cultural components of the Georgia flag conflict created political advantages to passing punitive welfare policies, the opposite occurred in Alabama.

Although Alabamians voiced the same support as Georgians for punitive reforms when asked in public opinion polls, my data suggest that these attitudes remained inert in Alabama. Preoccupied with tort reform, lawmakers faced little pressure to appeal to racial resentments or threats and expressed relatively few concerns about welfare reform. In 1996 and 1997 when the state turned its attention to welfare, tort reform still topped the political agenda. [10] While thousands of letters about tort reform flooded the Governor's office, only a handful of constituents wrote in to express concerns or preferences for welfare reform. In the media and the state capitol, tort reform supplanted welfare reform as the major issue on the state agenda. Concerns tort reform took the limelight off of welfare, leading one major anti-poverty advocate to assert that welfare reform was largely "buried" among other political battles (Montgomery 1996). In the end, politicians had more flexibility to support such reforms given the imperative placed on tort reform.

In contrast to Georgia where the flag controversy primed citizens to view welfare reform as a racial issue, leaders in Alabama did not view welfare as affecting one racial group more so than another, despite the similar racial make-up of the states' welfare rolls. News reports stressed the racially diverse composition of the state caseload (Sznajderman 2009). Members of the Alabama Legislative Black Caucus were split on the issue of welfare reform rather than uniformly against punitive reforms as the GLBC had been (Forrister 2009). Summarizing the lack of racial polarization during Alabama's reform process, Joel Sanders (2009), head of the Welfare Reform Division at the Department of Human Resources (DHR), echoed the views of other major players in the reform efforts when he said in an interview, "I don't remember a lot of battles across racial lines."

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[10] Georgia initiated its reforms two years before Alabama, but archival records and interviews give no indication that Alabama lawmakers reflected on Georgia's reforms during their own process. Both states selected Wisconsin and Oregon's new TANF programs as models for their own.

These quotes suggest that Alabama lawmakers approached the task of reforming welfare in a political climate in which racial divisions were of limited salience. At the same time, Governor James faced minimal pressure to pass punitive reforms. While Georgia reporters and elected officials routinely linked Zell Miller's flag controversy with welfare and his electoral future, projections about Fob James' reelection campaign were closely aligned with tort reform and the state budget. In this context, James initiated welfare reform debates by appointing a Welfare Reform Commission in 1996 to assess potential avenues for reform (Clark, Long, and Ratcliffe 1998). Chaired by conservative legislator Jim Carns, the Commission held a series of contentious debates in the lead up to state reforms in 1997. The 39-member commission was dominated by conservative anti-welfare forces, including state legislators and representatives from the governor's office and other state agencies. Also on the commission was Kimble Forrister of Alabama Arise. While elected officials pushed for punitive reforms such as two-year lifetime limits on welfare, Alabama Arise and the state's welfare reform director, Joel Sanders, advocated for supportive services.

As welfare debates progressed in the state legislature, Alabama Arise and Jim Carns introduced competing bills which offered different visions of welfare policy. While the Arise bill proposed the most lenient time limits, sanctions, and work requirements allow by federal law, the Carns bills sought to restrict welfare participation through more punitive means. Another key difference in the two bills was that the Carns bill provided virtually no work supports for families on welfare while the Arise bill included provisions for transportation, child care, and other transitional assistance. In champion his bill, Carns preyed on racialized welfare stereotypes, arguing that "We [don't] want [welfare recipients] sitting there are not wanting a job and not wanting to be trained to have a job. And let your child watch you do that because the

child grows up and does the same thing the parent does" (Carns 2009). However, as the correspondence data above demonstrates, these assertions failed to generate sufficient demand from the legislature or the public for punitive reforms.

Alabama Arise and its member organizations capitalized on a rare opportunity to claim center stage in policy debates. Nearly every news article from the time cited their activities. When it became clear that welfare reform would become a reality, they convened a press briefing to prepare reporters to counter arguments which highlighted the deserving nature of government beneficiaries. For example, "when the governor held his first press conference and started talking about the $3 trillion this country had spent [on welfare] … quoting the Heritage Foundation – we had briefed these reporters to ask [if they were] including veteran's benefits in that $3 trillion and social security and education spending" (Forrister 2009). Said Forrister (2009), "It was a rare case for us … The dynamic of reporters who want an opposition viewpoint, it worked great for us because they'd quote the governor and then come to us for a counter-quote." Media attention gave the anti-poverty coalition of advocates and lawmakers substantial sway in the discursive construction of need and worth during welfare reform debates.

Gradually, the tone of welfare reform debates shifted away from "a preoccupation with pregnancy and dependency to a serious discussion" about job availability and supportive services for the working poor (Alabama Arise 1997). When legislators faced a final decision about welfare reform, their choice was not between Carns' initial punitive reforms and a more lenient strategy crafted by Alabama Arise. It was between two more lenient reform packages. Ultimately, on the last day of the legislative session, the key players participated in closed-door negotiations to hammer out a final agreement. Arise and DHR engaged in point-counterpoint discussion of the welfare bill, finally agreeing on a five-year time limit and a series of supportive

policies. Even Carns, the conservative anti-welfare advocate, agreed on the final policy

structure. Joel Sanders (2009) said Carns and the conservatives that their discussion of welfare

concerns "evolved" over the course of the debates and "they became a lot more adept and talking

about the other parts of welfare, the needs that people had."

Alabama's Retreat to Punitive Measures

If racialized conflicts spur the passage of punitive reforms we would expect to see

Alabama tighten its welfare policies on the heels of such a conflict. This occurred in 2002 when

a voter identification debate wracked the state political scene. When the legislature debated a

voter identification measure, Black advocacy groups labeled the bill discriminatory, igniting a

multi-year struggle over the issue. The initiative drummed up racial resentments among the

state's residents. In response, the new governor, Democrat Don Siegleman, used administrative

channels to implement a full-family sanction and other restrictive welfare requirements.

Voter ID became an increasingly prominent political issue in the state after the 2000

presidential election, and it divided the state along racial lines. When thousands of Black

residents in Florida claimed they were unfairly turned away at the polls, conservative lawmakers

in Alabama saw an opportunity to build support for voter identification. Said one White

lawmaker, "Democrats have been stealing elections for 40 years, going back to 1960 that we are

aware of… I think this is the opportunity to make John Q. Citizen aware that the same thing

could happen in this state because we don't have the protections we need for honest elections"

(Gordon 2000). Few Whites saw voter id as a racial issue. Jim Carns, also a voter id champion,

expressed his surprise that voter identification became so contentious.

[I thought] Voter ID? That'll be easy to pass… [but] There was so much

suspicion. The defense was, it's going to… diminish people's right to vote…

they'll be intimidated and won't go to the polls. But you can't do anything

without showing ID now! (Carns 2009)

On the other hand, Black lawmakers were increasingly critical of the initiative in light of the

racially divisive Florida situation and the Jim Crow legacy of Black voter intimidation. While

White Alabamians did not see voter identification as a racial issue, it was an "enormous issue for

[Black] organizations... They felt that having to show id was discriminatory because you have so

many elderly blacks who haven't driven" (Sznajderman 2009).   Voter identification, they

argued, was a contemporary Black vote dilution tactic. The Alabama Democratic Conference, a

Black political lobbying group, argued that voter identification was "another barrier or test that

White officials are putting in… They may think it's good government [but] they thought literacy

tests were good government" (White 1997). The Black Caucus fought mightily to defeat the

initiative, labeling it as a "multifaceted attack on Black voting rights" (Rawls 1998).

The voter ID battle received widespread attention in the media. State news outlets

framed the battle in racial terms, pitting the majority of White legislators against Black leaders

determined to see the bill fail. The Birmingham News reported that this "racial split" prevented

any political resolution (Editorial 1998a). Not only did the advocates depict Black politicians as

the main obstacle to bill passage, they rejected the possibility that voter identification might

disproportionately affect Blacks. One advocate stated, "the only people who'll be scared away

from the polls by voter ID are the people who are pretending to be somebody else and shouldn't

be voting" (Editorial 1998b). White residents chided the state's Black community for trying to

"put a racial face" on all election issues (Brown 2000). These claims evidenced the heightened

racial tensions that arose at the time, a stark contrast to the tort reform debates years earlier.

The voter identification debate also placed heightened pressure on state political leaders.

Constituents admonished elected officials for finding it "so difficult to pass a simple voter ID

bill" (Marshall 2003). Governor Don Siegleman staked his gubernatorial campaign on a promise

to pass voter identification, but as racial divisions proved intractable both Siegleman and other

White lawmakers passed an array of policies which disproportionately hurt Blacks in the state.[11]

White political leaders blocked a $4.5 million appropriation to Tuskegee University, a

historically Black university and cut other spending for poor children in the Black Belt (Editorial

1998c). As the voter identification debate raged on, Governor Siegelman, in an apparent effort

to shore up conservative White votes, also strengthened the state's welfare sanctions and pushed

for drug screening for welfare recipients, a stance taken by no conservative legislators in 1997

and one entirely absent from his political agenda in the preceding years.[12] Frustrated with

Siegelman's welfare actions and his pandering to White voters, one Black Caucus member

denounced the governor as "a coldblooded racist" (White 2003). Comparing welfare reforms in

Alabama in 1997 and 2002 thus provides empirical evidence that the political salience of race

changes over time with the rise and fall of racialized conflicts and with profound effects on

welfare policy.

Discussion and Conclusions

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[11] Voter identification was ultimately passed by Governor Bob Riley in 2003. At the same time, the legislature refused to re-extend voting rights to ex-felons.

[12] Alabama Arise's Welfare Reform Caucus continued working on PRWORA-related issues during this time. Much of their work involved preparing for federal TANF reauthorization, lobbying the state government to spend surplus TANF funds, and fighting state moves toward more punitive welfare policies (Weidler 2000). Unlike in 1997, however, their efforts met with significantly less success when the broader political climate was highly racialized.

This article has theorized how the race-policy relationship endures in the absence of *de jure* discrimination. It suggests that racialized political conflicts have attitudinal, cultural, and political effects which make racial divisions salient forces in welfare politics. Attitudinally, racialized conflicts activate racial animus, spurring citizens to voice this threat and resentment in public forums. Because the actors in these conflicts use racial categories to express grievances, they elevate the socio-political salience of those categories in the political field. Culturally, these conflicts create a discursive opportunity structure for future political debates in which racial categories are a readily available and highly resonant frame for interpreting welfare and poverty. Politically, politicians can milk racialized understandings of poverty to pass punitive policies, and advocates for lenient reforms struggle to employ alternative frames due to the discursive constraints posed by the racialized conflict. Racialized conflicts also structure the rewards that come from passing punitive policies and the opportunities that anti-poverty advocates have for advancing their cause. They serve as active resource that politicians can manipulate to their benefit. Taken together, this theory helps explain how racial divisions structure welfare and when they are likely to fuel the adoption of restrictive welfare policies.

Although sociologists widely accept that race is a social construction, much research assumes that racial divisions have necessary attitudinal, cultural, or institutional/political effects. These theories argue that inert attitudes, dominant stereotypes, and racialized institutional structures drive the race-policy relationship. The racialized conflict theory accepts that racial stereotypes of welfare recipients are widely present (Hancock 2004; Neubeck and Cazanave 2001) and that racialized discourses are cultural resources available for politicians to exploit (Mendelberg 2001; Schram et al. 2009). However, it deviates from prior studies which assume that these factors are necessarily consequential for policy outcomes. My data indicate that for

racial stereotypes and divisions to be politically consequential, a racialized conflict must increase their resonance and utility. That is, policy elites may try to use race to manipulate welfare policy but their success likely depends on the contextual salience of racial divisions. This approach is consistent with the argument that racial divisions only have political consequences when they are salient (Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011). Linking and building on these arguments, the racialized conflict theory explains some of the sources of this salience, the role of collective actors in the policy process, and the forces that motivate certain political elites to employ racial divisions to achieve policy ends. These results suggest that while racial attitudes and stereotypes may be an enduring force in American politics, they are most likely to yield punitive policy outcomes in the context of racialized conflicts.

This theory has multiple ramifications for our understandings of race, politics, and the welfare state. First, these results suggest the need to rethink the relationship between ethno-racial demographics and welfare policy outcomes. While my findings by no means undermine this correlation, they provide an opportunity to theorize how demographics affect policy. I have suggested that racialized conflicts mediate the relationship between ethno-racial demographics and social policy outcomes. States with large Black populations are more likely to pass punitive policies not because of their demographics but because they are more likely to experience racialized conflicts. It follows that racial divisions may prompt the passage of punitive policies in relatively homogenous areas. The presence of racialized conflicts over the rising immigrant population may well explain why a homogenous state like Idaho adopted stringent welfare reforms when its neighbors pursued more lenient strategies. Future research should examine the effects of racialized conflicts in these more homogenous locales. The racialized conflict approach can also be refined and extended by assessing the model's applicability in Canada and

Western Europe where scholars speculate that rising immigration levels may undermine the support for generous programs (Alesina and Glaeser 2004; Eger 2010). Such tests will reveal the extent to which racialized conflicts structure global welfare state retrenchment.

The present study focused solely on Black-White relations, but there is suggestive evidence that racialized conflicts may explain the effects of race on policy formation beyond the Black-White divide. Hispanic demographics and anti-Hispanic stereotypes have patterned welfare policy decisions historically, although to a lesser extent than for Blacks (Fox 2012; Reese 2005; Soss, Fording, and Schram 2011). Yet, when southwestern states formulated their welfare plans in the mid-1990s, the explicit racialized attacks on Arizona Hispanics penetrated welfare reform debates, prompting the state to adopt strict policies. In California, anti-immigration forces employed a legality frame which derailed efforts to explicitly racialize Hispanics and created openings for unprecedented welfare benefits for noncitizens (Brown 2013). Additional research is required, but these findings suggest that racialized conflicts may mediate the relationship between Hispanic demographics and welfare policy.

Because racial demographics are correlated with many restrictive policies (e.g. Behrens, Uggen, and Manza 2003; Welch and Payne 2010), the racialized conflict model may prove useful in understanding how racial meanings are manipulated across diverse policy domains. It is plausible that welfare policymaking is more susceptible to the influence of racialized conflicts than are other policy areas. Both welfare and anti-Black prejudice are tightly intertwined with beliefs about work ethic, likely creating a symbiotic relationship between racial divisions and welfare policy. Given historical associations between Blacks and crime, criminal justice policies may also be driven by racialized conflicts. Social policy issues such as education or health care

may be less affected given that the moral boundaries evoked in these policy debates do not overlap as strongly with racialized perceptions of worth.

By applying the racialized conflict theory to other policy domains, future research can test the theory's reach but also specify the role of civil society in mediating the effects of racialized conflicts. Welfare stands out among policy domains for its relative lack of dedicated advocacy organizations, but the presence of strong advocacy may mediate the effects of racialized conflicts on policy outcomes. Activism and lobbying by multi-racial coalitions may be especially crucial in this regard. Since the late 1990s, Alabama Arise has confronted significant obstacles in its quest to ensure protections for low-income Alabamians and have lost more battles than they have won. These varied successes indicate that a strong multi-racial coalition is not a sufficient condition for effective anti-poverty advocacy. That said, such organizations may dilute the effects of racialized conflicts on policy outcomes, and this question is worthy of future research. While the results presented here suggest inherent dangers in making race-based claims, a small-N study should not be read to imply that racial framings will always fail. The Georgia case study does suggest that race-based claims are more effective when advanced by long-standing multi-racial advocacy groups. When a coalition of Black organizations led the campaign to change the Georgia flag (even when supported by the white Governor), they were unsuccessful. But in the early 2000s, after a strong multi-racial coalition emerged to support the change, the state removed the Confederate emblem from the flag.

Future research must also examine the limits of racialized conflict theory. I have suggested that racialized conflicts must either immediately precede or coincide with welfare debates. This is because racial grievances, tensions, and alliances remain ripe for mobilization and exploitation in the immediate aftermath a racialized conflict. The political imperative to

respond to these conflicts likely diminishes with the passage of time and the rise of other intervening political issues, scandals, and media frenzies. Similarly, as Schattschneider (1975, 2) famously wrote, "the outcome of every conflict is determined by the extent to which the audience becomes involved." The paired comparison employed here does not allow for an empirical assessment of these issues. Future research should examine how the timing and participatory scope of a racialized conflict alter its effects and also whether certain types of debates are more likely to erupt into racialized conflicts. Additionally, the present analysis does not permit an analysis of interaction effects between racialized conflicts and political or economic forces. For example, racialized conflicts may be particularly pronounced in their welfare effects during openings in the political opportunity structure, such as during times of electoral transition. It is also likely that racialized conflicts affect policy outcomes only in situations of electoral capture (Frymer 1999) or when minority turn out is low. Future research is needed to evaluate these patterns.

The present study also has significant implications for our understanding of the democratic process and suggests a need to rethink our current approach to studying racial threat and the role of public opinion in policymaking. Threat hypotheses have become standard in the social sciences among scholars seeking to identify the sources of racially restrictive policies. Yet, scholars typically operationalize threat as a demographic phenomenon and one that affects only the dominant group. The Georgia flag controversy and the Alabama voter identification battle indicate that the core of racial threat is, as Blumer (1958) suggested, a subjectively experienced sentiment about group position. Future studies would be well-served to move beyond traditional demographic measures of threat to account for this dynamism and its repercussions. The same can be said for analyses of public opinion and policy formation. Calls

to re-center policy research around public opinion (Brooks and Manza 2007; Manza and Brooks 2012) rightly proclaim the centrality of public views in policy formation; however, my findings suggest they misspecify the mechanisms by which opinion influences policy. Public preferences must be mobilized in order to exert political effects. This is evidenced by the fact that anti-welfare and racial attitudes in Georgia and Alabama have remained relatively constant in recent decades, thus rendering static attitude measures unable to account for shifting welfare policies in each state. The key to capturing the effects of public opinion on policy outcomes may rest not in longitudinal studies but in analyses the process by which attitudes are mobilized into action.

Finally, this study offers broader lessons for the study of politics and policymaking. These case studies demonstrate the importance of theorizing policy spillover effects. While researchers typically view policy domains as insular, the present study indicates that disparate policy domains may be highly sensitive to one another. In both Georgia and Alabama, the conflicts which immediately preceded welfare reform activated cleavages which altered the salient stakeholders in welfare reform, the discursive opportunities for policymakers and advocates, and which policy tools seemed advantageous to pursue. Although these findings provide a reminder that scholars must examine extra-domain dynamics, future work is necessary to construct a robust theory of policy spillover effects.

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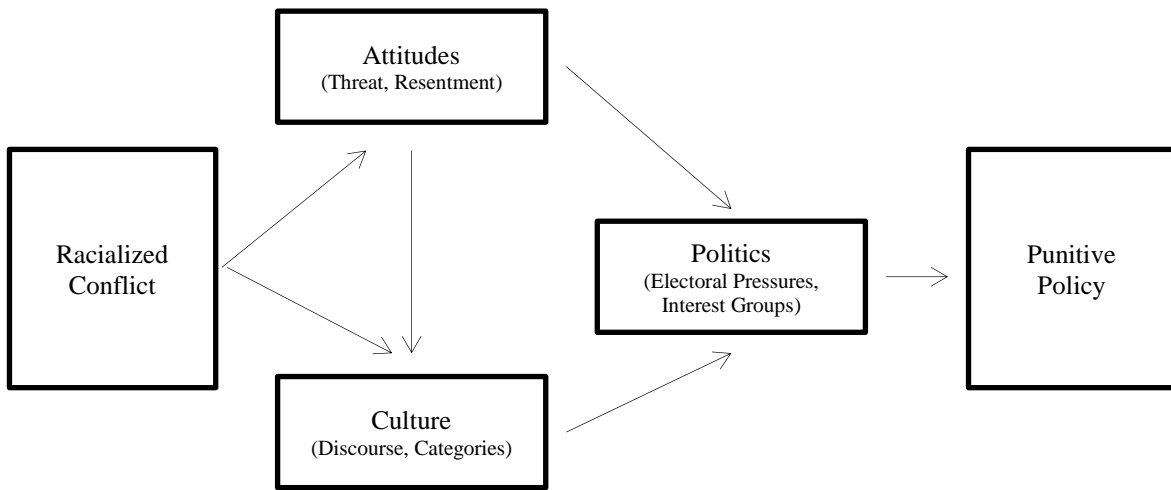
Figure 1: The Racialized Conflict Theory

Table 1: State Welfare Reform Policies and Key Characteristics, circa 1996

	Alabama	Georgia
Welfare Reform Decisions		
Work Requirements Stricter than Federal	No	Yes
Time Limits Shorter than Federal	No	Yes
Full-Family (Strict) Sanctions	No	Yes
Demographics		
% Black in Population	25%	27%
Welfare Recipients, % Black	73	72
Economic, Social, and Political Characteristics		
Unemployment Rate	5%	5%
Poverty Rate	17%	14%
Budget Surplus	8%	7%
Births to Unmarried Women as % of All Births	34%	35%
Party of Governor	Republican	Democrat
Legislative Control	Democrat	Democrat
% of Residents Favoring Two Year Time Limit	80%	82%
Initial Implementation of AFDC Work Mandates	1953	1953
Latest AFDC Waiver Request (Range 1988-1995)	Yes	Yes
Racial Attitudes		
% of News Quotations containing Welfare Stereotypes[+]	26%	22%
% of Residents Supporting Interracial Marriage[#]	52%	52%
% of Residents in Favor of Full Racial Integration	46%	54%
% of Residents Who Believe Most Blacks Work Hard	8%	7%

[+] Figures derived from the content analysis described in the text.

[#] Figures are from the Spring 1993 Southern Focus poll and represent the percentage of respondents who answered "No" to the question "Would you object if a child of yours dated someone of a different race?"

[*] The American National Election Survey (1996) asks respondents to rate how hardworking or lazy they believe Blacks to be (1= hard working and 7 = lazy). The average answer for Alabama was 4.0 while the average for Georgia was 3.8.

Sources: Administration of Children and Families (1997), American National Election Survey (1996), Soss et al (2001), Soule and Zylan (1997), Southern Focus Poll (1992), Southern Focus Poll (1993), U.S. Census of Population and Housing (1990, 1998), Zylan and Soule (2000)

Figure 2: Georgia Welfare Milestones and Approval Ratings for Governor Zell Miller

Final reforms
become law

First reforms
implemented

Miller ends flag push,
starts welfare proposals

Approve

Disapprove

Flag Flap begins

First reforms pass

90%
80%
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%

Fall 1991 · Spring 1992 · Fall 1992 · Spring 1993 · Fall 1993 · Spring 1994 · Fall 1994 · Spring 1995 · Fall 1995 · Spring 1996 · Fall 1996 · Spring 1997 · Fall 1997