Appendix A Estimation of White Wealth

Each of the Southern states in the early twentieth century published county-by-county statistics, sometimes segregated by race, on the assessed value of real and personal property or on the amount of taxes paid. If one assumes that the average Negro male adult owned, say, $100 in tax-assessed property, one can easily calculate the wealth per white male adult in each county from the overall wealth statistics. The formula for each county is:

$$\text{white wealth per white adult male} = \frac{\text{Total wealth} - (\text{number of Negro adult males}) \times \$100}{\text{number of white adult males}}$$

Two soluble problems are the validation of the estimate of Negro wealth and the assumption that Negro wealth was roughly constant across all the counties in a state. In 1908 in North Carolina, the average value of assessed property for Negroes was $137. Assuming Negro wealth to be $100 and $150, the correlations between the actual county-by-county figures on white property value—North Carolina conveniently separated the figures by race—and computed estimates of white property values are + .996 and + .997, respectively. This means that Negro poverty varied hardly at all from county to county. In Virginia a similar correlational analysis turned up a coefficient of + .982.

For the relevant tables in chapter 9, I assumed in every case that the average property value for Negroes was $100. I also computed the white wealth figures using estimates for Negro wealth varying from $50 to $300 in each state. Correlations between wealth and voting are virtually identical using any Negro wealth estimates in this range.

The chief difficulty with these estimates of white wealth per capita is that they are measured on the county, not the individual level. If subcounty differences in white wealth were consistently very large, correlations between these estimates and voting behavior would not be very meaningful. Unfortunately, I know of no very precise published information on subcounty differences in wealth among Southern whites.

While recognizing the imperfections in the estimates, we must also note that they are the best measures of white economic differences readily available. No other economic indexes for the postbellum South, so far as I know, expressly separate Negro from white wealth. Consequently, although one should not claim to "prove" propositions about individuals on the basis of

aggregate data, correlations computed from these estimates of white wealth do have what Eric Allardt has referred to as "informative value" in making "causal interpretations."[1]

1. Eric Allardt, "Aggregate Analysis: The Problem of Its Informative Value," in Mattei Dogan and Stein Rokkan, eds., *Quantitative Ecological Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 41–52.