

THE TRANSFORMATION OF LOCAL STATE AND CLASS STRUCTURES  
AND RESISTANCE TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE SOUTH

by

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Under the Supervision of Professor Michael T. Aiken

The purpose of this research is to provide an adequate explanation for the strength and extent of the opposition to the Civil Rights Movement in the southern United States since World War II. Most explanations of race relations in the South rely to some extent upon assumptions concerning the survival of traditional values which lead southern whites to discriminate against blacks. This research attempts to delineate the social structures which reinforce discriminatory practices and make racial prejudices more likely.

A theory of local political structure in the United States is developed which views local state structures as having two principal sets of constraints: those imposed by local class structure and those imposed by the super-ordinate state. Historically, the narrowest limits on the state were imposed by the class structure of cotton plantation agriculture in which black tenant farmers were the chief recipients of physical and economic coercion and intimidation. The transformation of that class structure began during the 1930's with the implementation of the New Deal farm programs. These programs, administered through a committee system which was dominated by cotton planters and their allies, created a new decision environment which led cotton planters to reduce the acreage devoted to cotton and to

substitute capital for labor in response to market vagaries. Both the reduction of cotton acreage and the adoption of labor saving innovation had the effect of displacing cotton tenants and made labor coercive practices less important for the survival of cotton planters. As these processes transformed the plantation class structure, the limits on the local racial state were expanded but the state structures themselves remained intact and continued to enforce racial discrimination and segregation until the 1960s.

The central hypothesis of this research is that resistance to the Civil Rights Movement varied in proportion to the extent that the class structure of cotton plantation agriculture imposed the major constraint on the local state. This theory is tested using a weighted least squares regression analysis of four panels of voter registration data: two before and two after the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Previous analyses of black voter registration rates have found that black population percentile dominates all other explanatory variables and have suggested that this result supports the hypothesis that competitive race relations lead to discrimination against blacks. By disaggregating black population percentile into occupational categories, the present research indicates that rural class structure is the most important determinant of black voter registration rates before 1965. In particular, the presence of white farm owners, black farm tenants, and black farm laborers had the strongest negative effects on black voter registration rates.

After 1965, the importance of rural class structure declined dramatically and industrial class relations became more important. This result is consistent with the notion that the Civil Rights Movement and the intervention of the Federal Government transformed the racial structure of the local state of the South. Little support was found for theories of competitive race relations as important determinants of black registration rates. By contrast, elements of rural class structure appeared to provide important support for racial discrimination as indicated by voter registration rates.

Approval

## PREFACE

I grew up in the South during the 1950's and early 1960's when the processes of social and political change analyzed in this dissertation were placing enormous strain on the structure of southern society. Conflicts between racial groups, between racial groups and local governmental authorities, and among federal, state and local governmental authorities were interrupting the daily routines of thousands of people, forcing them to relate to those of other races in new ways. As was the case with other Americans who lived through this period of history, I reacted to events as they occurred, made practical decisions concerning them, and became a different person as race related behaviors which were required at one point in time were prohibited at a later point. This research developed out of my desire to understand those processes and the shaping of people's lives which stemmed from them.

This task would have been more difficult without the assistance of a large number of people. I am thankful for the guidance provided by the members of my dissertation committee: Michael T. Aiken, who served as committee chairman, Karl E. Taeuber, and Erik O. Wright, who read several lengthy drafts of this document and provided insightful criticism and advice. Herbert Hill and Charles Halaby also contributed helpful criticisms of the final draft.

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Many friends and relatives followed my research with interest and enthusiasm and made valuable contributions for which I am very thankful. I especially appreciate the encouragement and assistance provided by my daughter, Polly W. James. Discussing this research with her helped me clarify my telling of the story and reminded me of the importance of the changes which have occurred.

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## Chapter One

### State Structure in the U.S.: The Case of the South

#### Introduction

Of central concern to students of politics is the relationship between the state and the economy or, in other words, how is economic power translated into political power and vice versa. Curiously, studies of race relations often ignore this question, although they frequently identify both economic and political factors as being among the most important forces which affect race relations. The study of southern race relations, however, leads inevitably back to this fundamental issue.

In his classic study of southern politics, V.O. Key (1949:5) stated, referring primarily to the pre-depression era,

In its grand outlines the politics of the South revolves around the position of the Negro. It is at times interpreted as a politics of cotton, as a politics of free trade, as a politics of agrarian poverty, or as a politics of planter and plutocrat. Although such interpretations have a superficial validity, in the last analysis the major peculiarities of southern politics go back to the Negro. Whatever phase of the southern political process one seeks to understand, sooner or later the trail of inquiry leads to the Negro.

While Key appears to reject the notion that economic processes play an important role in determining the politics of the South, he finds it necessary to qualify this view almost immediately. In the next paragraph he notes that "(t)he hard core of the political South--and the backbone of southern political unity--is made up of those counties and sections of the southern states in which Negroes constitute a

substantial proportion of the population" (1949:5). The political problem in those areas is one of the "maintenance of control by a white minority" (1949:5). But what does the white minority have to fear from the political ascendancy of the black majority? Key points out that the counties with large black populations are generally those in which large-scale plantation agriculture prevails. "Here are located most of the large agricultural operators who supervise the work of many tenants, sharecroppers, and laborers, most of whom are colored" (1949:5). Finally, Key compares the interest in white supremacy of the whites who lived in the hill counties to those of the whites in the pre-depression cotton belt.

"The whites of the regions with few Negroes have a less direct concern over the maintenance of white rule, whereas the whites of the black belts operate an economic and social system based on subordinate, black labor." Key 1949:9)

Thus, it appears that the race issue, the dominant southern political issue during almost all of southern history, was related to economic issues, at least before World War II.

By the 1970s the political differences between the hill counties and the cotton belt counties of the South were much less distinct as the politics of race declined in both areas. Now the voting patterns of the counties with large black populations tend to be more liberal than other southern counties.

Clearly the political status of southern black people changed dramatically during the last fifty years. As will be shown in a subsequent chapter, the greatest changes occurred after 1960, but the transformation began during the 1930s. Before 1930, blacks were

almost completely disfranchised and were relegated to racially segregated and inferior institutions. By 1965, legal segregation had ended and blacks were actively participating in the political and social life of their communities in increasing numbers. Between 1882 and 1950, over 3000 blacks were lynched in the southern states. Although the number of lynchings was declining by World War II, blacks who tried to exercise basic civil rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution were still being murdered during the 1960s. In 1962, Medgar Evers, the Field Secretary of the Mississippi NAACP, while in his own front yard, was shot in the back. Yet in 1971, Charles Evers, Medgar's brother, ran for Governor of Mississippi and received 173,000 votes, some 22 percent of the votes cast. A black Representative was elected to the Mississippi State Legislature in 1967, and Georgia and Texas sent black Representatives to the U.S. Congress in 1972, the first blacks to serve in these capacities since the nineteenth century. By 1976, over 2000 blacks had been elected to state and local offices in the South where almost none had served in 1960.

Southern blacks also experienced sweeping social and economic changes during this period. In 1930, most southern blacks were farmers. Only 30 percent of the black population lived in metropolitan areas. Although severely shaken by the invasion of the boll weevil, cotton production was still the most important southern economic activity, both in terms of the number of people employed and dollar value of the product produced.

By the 1970s, the cotton plantation based primarily upon the labor of black tenants and sharecroppers had virtually disappeared. Thousands of small farmers, tenants, and croppers of both races had abandoned the land in favor of the cities of the North and South. In their place remained a class of agricultural laborers whose income came from wages rather than crop shares. They typically lived in small towns and cities and commuted to, rather than resided on, the farms where they were employed. The farm operators who remained invested in expensive machinery and used the most advanced methods. They diversified their operations and abandoned their dependence on King Cotton. Industrial employment expanded and, by the 1970s, the South began to realize a net black immigration for the first time in decades.

Over fifty percent of southern blacks lived in cities by 1970, and only twenty percent of those who lived in rural areas worked on farms. As blacks congregated in the cities, they achieved an anonymity and independence of white control and influence not possible for black sharecroppers on the pre-Depression cotton plantation. This independence permitted the development of autonomous black cultural institutions such as the church and various civil rights and self-help organizations.

Urbanization, black cultural autonomy and black political enfranchisement appear to be parallel social processes which condition each other in crucial ways. Yet, the relationships between these processes are not simple, one-to-one, continuous functions.



Urbanization and the development of black cultural institutions in the cities appear at first glance to have been relatively smooth, incremental processes. Black political enfranchisement, by contrast, came in astonishing leaps during a span of only five or ten years, and only after the black civil rights movement exploded upon the scene to trigger the active intervention of the federal government.

The use of verbs such as "trigger" and "exploded" implies that social pressure for the political enfranchisement of blacks had been accumulating for some time but was restrained by a superior force. What was this force? I believe that the primary obstacle to black citizenship in the South was the nature of the state structure at the local level. This assertion requires further elaboration and is a central issue addressed by the research reported in this dissertation.

One of the striking features of southern history since the Civil War is the incredible frequency and extent of physical violence and coercion directed by whites against blacks. The literature on the lynching of black people is filled with accounts of the most shocking and horrible murders imaginable, often committed in a carnival-like atmosphere in the presence of women and children. Beatings, moral intimidation, and threats were part of the life experience of all black people who grew up in the South during this period. Not even the most prestigious of southern blacks was immune. Dr. Robert Russa Moton, President of Tuskegee Institute, was forced to flee the Tuskegee campus for several days in 1923 when the Ku Klux Klan threatened his life.

Organizations designed to resist the day-to-day subordination of blacks were always special targets of white violence. Black tenant unions which tried to negotiate better treatment with white cotton planters and landlords were brutally repressed by the beating and killing of blacks suspected of being members. The Progressive Farmers and Household Union of Phillips County, Arkansas, met such a fate in 1919, as did the Alabama Sharecroppers' Union in the 1930s. At least seven black union organizers were lynched in Alabama and Mississippi during 1935 alone. Violence bordering on race war occurred in 1932, when posses of 500 white men terrorized the black community around Camp Hill, Alabama, for 4 days, killing several black union members, beating others, and jailing at least 30.

Terror tactics were continued into the 1950s and 1960s. The Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1956 was met with beatings, sniper fire into homes and automobiles, and the bombing of homes and churches. During the 1960s black and white civil rights workers were routinely thrown into jail for participating in voter registration drives or civil rights demonstrations such as attempting to use public facilities restricted by law for the use of whites. Many civil rights workers endured severe beatings by or with the consent of local law enforcement authorities. Medgar Evers was slain in June of 1963. Vernon Dahmer, a leader of a voter registration drive in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, was burned to death in his own home by arsonists in January of 1966. At least fourteen other civil rights workers and their allies were murdered during the intervening two years.

One of the most revealing features of this systematic violence against blacks is that it has been the regular practice, if unofficial policy, of the southern law enforcement authorities. Martin Luther King stated in 1963 that

(I)n the days of slavery, social license and custom placed the unbridled power of the whip in the hands of overseers and masters. Today--especially in the southern half of the nation--armies of officials are clothed in uniform, invested with authority, armed with the instruments of violence and death and conditioned to believe that they can intimidate, maim or kill Negroes with the same recklessness that once motivated the slaveowner. If one doubts this conclusion, let him search the records and find how rarely in any southern state a police officer has been punished for abusing a Negro. (1963:29)

When violence against blacks was perpetrated by white "citizens" rather than by the police, it was often with police encouragement and consent. Too frequently, the police stood by and refused to intervene while blacks were brutalized in their presence. For example, a white policeman offered his nightstick to one of a number of ruffians who were attacking three black demonstrators in St. Augustine, Florida, in 1964. Even if southern policemen were not directly involved, the sure knowledge that white violence against blacks would go unpunished undoubtedly served to encourage the continuation of that violence. Six years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and massive federal intervention to guarantee the proper registration of southern blacks, fear of intimidation and violence were still contributing factors to their non-participation. John Lewis, Director of the Voter Education Project and former SNCC Chairman, beaten a dozen times before the 1963 march on Washington, testified in 1971

before the House Judiciary Subcommittee for Civil Rights Oversight:

In the past years of our struggle for voting rights, we have seen much officially sanctioned violence against black people seeking to register to vote. We have seen blacks shot down on courthouse steps. We have seen heads cracked by nightsticks, peaceful marchers being tear gassed, and old women and young children run down by horses. Violent acts and assassinations continue in the South and although they do not occur as frequently as they once did, a climate of fear is still perpetuated. It is my opinion that this climate of fear is in part responsible for the high rate of unregistered blacks. (1971:242)

Journalists and historians have provided ample documentation of the violence, coercion, and intimidation experienced by southern blacks as part of their everyday lives. Nevertheless, sociologists, political scientists, and economists have downplayed the role of these acts in their explanations of southern politics, race relations, and economic development. For example, some economic historians purport to find no effects of violence, coercion, or discrimination on the economic experiences of southern blacks during the late nineteenth century (Higgs 1977; DeCanio 1974; Reid 1973 Ransom and Sutch 1977; see Woodman 1977 for a critique). Richard Day (1967), an economist whose work will be reviewed in more detail in a later chapter, completely ignored the political status of southern blacks in his account of the transformation of southern agriculture. In his view, blacks may have been the objects of violence and coercion, but that in no way contributed to their displacement from southern agriculture.

Similarly, in Talcott Parsons' theoretical discussion of the societal trend toward the attainment of full citizenship rights by

American blacks, violence and coercion are never mentioned at all, implying that although they may be present they are in no way a necessary component of black/white social relationships. Of course, resistance to this "inclusion" process was strongest in the South, but only because the "structure of Southern society has been more 'archaic,'" that is, more particularistic (1966:742). One might infer that violence and coercion are just two of many ways of expressing particularism, but are not essential to its maintenance.

In the most comprehensive treatment of southern racial politics during the 1960s, Donald Matthews and James Prothro concluded that fear and intimidation "are not major causes" of the non-participation in politics of southern blacks (1966:308). This conclusion is somewhat surprising, given Dr. Prothro's testimony before the Civil Rights Commission some two years earlier. He had conducted a study for the Commission of the reasons for the non-registration of black Mississippi school teachers. When asked to provide some detail on the reasons given by the teachers for failing to register, Dr. Prothro replied:

Fear. Fear of loss of job was the most common response....There was no question asked, 'Would you be fearful of any specific kind of sanction?' This was in response to relatively open-ended questions.... (T)he basic fear was fear of loss of job, the possibility of loss of job. Then other expressions of fear that occurred at least with some frequency were fear of violence, fear of job loss and violence, fear of the interview itself, unspecified fear, fear of discrimination by registrars, fear of discussing politics publicly. (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1965a:209)

Ironically, this study was not mentioned in his larger work (Matthews and Prothro 1966).

There are notable exceptions to these influential accounts, of which more will be said later. Nevertheless, it is not a great exaggeration to say that social scientists have been reluctant to address the problem of state-sanctioned violence and coercion in American society. This omission is most glaring when the focus is on the South, the arena where law enforcement agencies have historically been the most remiss in protecting blacks from violence and coercion.

In my view, the widespread use of violence and intimidation to control the behavior of southern blacks was a fundamental result of the nature of southern state structures. The fact that southern blacks have been the preferred target of state-sanctioned and perpetrated violence and intimidation is just a special case of the central problem with all states: How is state power to be made accountable to the subject population? To the extent that there are societal groups with incompatible interests, this problem is exacerbated. According to the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, "Preserving civil peace is the first responsibility of government" (1968:171). Of course, preserving the civil peace also preserves the existing distribution of wealth and privilege, however unequal it may be.

Because economic activities, the production and distribution of goods and services, are the major source of wealth and privilege in society, states must bear certain complementary relationships to the economic systems which are subject to their jurisdictions. Historically, black people have occupied a special place in the

southern economy, and I believe that the nature of that "place" is the key to understanding the role which state-sanctioned violence played in the determination of southern race relations. The remainder of this dissertation is an attempt to provide an explanation for southern race relations within the context of the relationship between southern state structure and the southern economy. As a preface to this task, it is useful to develop some general theoretical propositions concerning the relationship between the state and the economy.

#### State and Economy

It seems axiomatic that the state must be functionally compatible with the economic system located within its jurisdiction. If the state\* enforces policies which are not compatible with the existing system, one of two things will occur. Either the economic system will be transformed into one which is compatible with the state or the state will be forced to abandon the actions which threaten the existing economic system. Transformative state actions incompatible with an existing economic system range between those with incremental and almost unnoticed effects to those with abruptly dramatic and catastrophic effects. An example of the former might be legislation designed to protect the environment from the adverse effects of mining

\*I will capitalize the "s" in state when reference is made to the various States of the United States, a level in the hierarchical state structure; otherwise the term "state" is a generic term referring to formal state (political) structure as defined below on page 14.

which is so costly to implement that only the largest mining companies have financial reserves sufficient to comply with it. In this case, the state contributes to the incremental demise of the less competitive mining firms with smaller cash flows available to meet the high start-up costs required by the new legislation. An example of the latter is provided by the nationalization of all industrial enterprise in the Soviet Union after the 1917 revolution. In this case, the state essentially eliminated capitalist economic activity. That is, the realization of profits by owners of capital was no longer the basic calculus guiding investment decisions in the U.S.S.R.

Functional compatibility between the state and the economy does not imply that the interconnection between the two has to be an organic, one-to-one relationship in which changes in one are automatically and immediately translated into changes in the other. There is usually a variety of state actions which are compatible with a particular economic system. They range between having no impact on the economic system to being completely reinforcing and necessary for the continued existence of it. An example of the latter was the system of laws, courts, and law enforcement agencies which protected the authority of slave owners over their slaves. The ante-bellum cotton plantation system based upon slave labor could not have survived in the absence of such a state.

One way of formulating the relationship between the state and the economy is to say that the economy places limits of functional compatibility on the state. In other words, the nature of the



economic system determines which types of states will be functionally compatible with it. Stating the relationship in this form raises another issue. Why should state types be specified as the crucial factor when it is obviously the implementation of state policy which affects the economy?

When one considers the action of the state with regard to the economy or any other issue, it is always the action of state personnel which is being observed. The implementation of state policy involves coordinated action by agents of the state in relationship to individuals outside of the state who are subject to state authority. The actions of state personnel range from inaction through the issuing of symbolic statements, the control of the distribution of state revenues, to the exercise of physical force and coercion on the subject population. Whatever the specific actions might be, if they are not coordinated with each other they lose their effectiveness and cannot be consistently imposed on the subject population. Coordination implies organization, and organization implies a structured set of relationships among the individuals who occupy places in those organizations. Positions within a state organization place constraints on the behavior of incumbents and make certain actions more likely than others. Thus, the basic compatibility between the state and the economy is one of congruence between the structure of the state and the economy. Without such congruence, the implementation of policies which are compatible with the existing economic system cannot be guaranteed.

### State Structure

I will use the term "state structure" to refer to the interlocking network of formal organizations which are usually legally constituted and which exercise a monopoly of the means of physical violence and coercion within a certain territory. These include the police, the courts, legislative bodies, executive agencies, and the like. While this definition appears similar to that proposed by Weber (1946:78), I have not included a notion of the legitimacy of the state within the definition because this appears to me to presume exactly what is at stake in the conflicts and struggles between contending forces over the nature of state structure and policy. More on this subject will follow in later sections.

The term "structure" implies a set of social positions which display relatively stable patterns of relationships with each other over time, and which place constraints on the behaviors of the individuals who occupy those positions. All complex organizations satisfy this definition. The feature which distinguishes state structures from other networks of organizations is their power to decisively adjudicate conflicts between societal groups and between groups and the state itself. This power is predicated upon the state's capacity to use physical force and coercion to enforce its judgments on the governed population. Taxes, a form of coercion, provide the revenues which bind state personnel to state organizations in the conduct of state business with respect to non-state personnel. State and non-state personnel are defined by whether or not they

occupy positions within state organizations, and state organizations are defined by their possession and exercise of a monopoly of the means of physical coercion and force. Only through organization can the state maintain its monopoly of the exercise of coercion and force.

In the United States, however, the exercise of state power, while constituting a monopoly, is far from being unitary and perfectly coordinated. State organizations have overlapping jurisdictions which often contradict each other. There is a hierarchical relationship between local state organizations such as those of municipalities and counties, agencies of the various States, and those of the national state. The national state establishes limits within which subordinate state structures must function. Similarly, the several States establish limits for political structures within their geographic jurisdictions. But the limits established by the hierarchy of state structures are often quite broad and considerable variation in the exercise of coercion exists among subordinate structures, both in the levels of force exerted against target populations, and with respect to the specific populations which are the preferential targets of the state's force and coercion.

Often there are overlapping jurisdictions of segments of the state structure which are ostensibly at the same hierarchical level. For example, the Office of Civil Rights and the Justice Department have pursued policies which sometimes reinforced each other and sometimes conflicted with each other at different times during the 1960s and early 1970s. These overlapping jurisdictions also provide

room for regional variation in the implementation of state policy.

#### Local and Non-Local State Structure

As discussed above, the state structures of any particular locality are determined, in the sense of being constrained, by a hierarchy of superordinate, and sometimes conflicting, state structures. Because these determinations are not complete, that is, the limits imposed on subordinate structures are often quite broad, political forces unique to a particular locality may have an enormous effect in determining the nature of the state structures peculiar to that locality. For example, and in anticipation of one of the central arguments of this study, the farmer committee system of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) was dominated by cotton planters wherever cotton was an important crop in the South. Not surprisingly, the revenues distributed by the AAA went primarily to the large cotton planters; conversely, tenants and sharecroppers were displaced by the AAA programs even though tenant displacement contradicted the official policy of the AAA. By contrast, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) remained under the control of the Federal government and often acted in the interests of tenants, croppers, and migrant laborers and against the interests of the planter class. Consequently, the FSA incurred the animosity of influential planters across the South. Eventually, cotton planters and their allies effectively promoted the dismantling of the FSA by Congress.

This example illustrates the fact that political forces can affect state structure at any of a number of locations in the hierarchy of structures. When the planters were unable to dominate the functioning of the FSA within their particular localities, they were able to ally themselves with other large farm groups through their Representatives in Congress, and destroy the FSA by denying it funds and key personnel (McConnell 1953). The representation of planter interests in Congress, however, was a function of the political power of planters in particular localities throughout the South. In turn, the power of the planters was the obverse of the weakness of their principal competition, the tenants, croppers, and small farmers. The political weakness of these classes was in part a result of the state-enforced political subordination of blacks in the South.

Political forces always have a base in particular localities. Whether or not political forces unique to particular localities can project their power outside of the base territory and impose it on the populations of other sections of the country depends upon the strength of the forces within the base territory, the nature of the pressure which it can focus on groups of other areas, and the capability to make alliances with forces in other areas. Even if local political forces cannot project their power beyond their immediate locality, the possibility of dominating state structures within their territory still exists. When the state structures or segments of state structures of particular localities are dominated by political forces

based in those same localities, I will call those state structures local state structures. Domination, in the sense intended here, means that of the two causal forces being considered (namely, the superordinate state structures and locally based political forces), local political forces are the most important in establishing the limits within which these state structures must function. Conversely, if the state structure or segments of state structures deployed in particular localities are principally determined by the superordinate state structures, then they will be called non-local state structures.

#### State Structures and Political Crises

Conflicts between political forces within particular localities are experienced as political crises when a contending force threatens the dominant force to the point of transforming local political structure in its favor. In other words, a political crisis occurs only when a rival to the dominant forces within a particular locality attempts to or is in the process of transforming the limits on political structures in ways which threaten the interests of the most powerful political forces in that locality. This challenge can come about in either or both of two ways. First, the previously subordinated force becomes stronger than its political enemy, establishes new limits on the state to the disadvantage of its enemy, and becomes the new dominant force in the particular area. Second, the subordinate forces make an alliance with non-local forces and are able to establish new limits on the state via the superordinate state

structure. In the first case, local state structures remain local but are constrained by a new dominant force whose base is within the locality under consideration. In the second case, the local state structure is transformed into a non-local state structure through the imposition of new constraints on it by the superordinate state. Furthermore, these new constraints on this segment of state structure are disadvantageous to the dominant (or previously dominant) political forces within that locality.

As is implied in this discussion, state structures with jurisdictions in particular localities can be classified according to whether or not they are dominated by local political forces directly or by non-local forces via the superordinate state structure. At the same time, state structures may tend to reinforce or protect the interests of the dominant local forces, or they may not. Those state structures which disadvantage the dominant forces within particular locales tend to transform the local distribution of political power in favor of the previously subordinated force. These two types of state structures may be deemed conservative and transformative state structures, respectively. Classifying state structures by these two dimensions gives rise to the four-fold typology of Table 1.1. Political crises are generated only by those state structures which tend to redistribute power to previously subordinated forces. These types of state structures are illustrated by the bottom row of the typology (cells 3 and 4 of Table 1.1).

Even within fairly restricted geographic areas, it is not

uncommon to find segments of the state structure which fall into different cells of this typology. Furthermore, because state structures impose imperfect constraints on the individuals who occupy positions within those structures, the policies implemented by these agents of the state may be inconsistent over time. For example, judges who usually render decisions in favor of white planters may, in some cases, find in favor of a black tenant with a complaint against his landlord. Occasional inconsistencies pose no problem for the dominant forces. Continued policies which challenge the power of the dominant forces will trigger a crisis. For example, a southern judge who always found in favor of blacks in suits against whites, especially white landlords, would have threatened the power of planters to control their black agricultural labor force, and would surely have generated considerable political opposition. A judge who almost always found in favor of whites against blacks, however, would have aroused little opposition because of that policy, as the black experience of southern justice has so repeatedly demonstrated.

With these qualifications, it is possible to illustrate the typology by locating within it various state segments which have existed in the South since the 1930s. For example, the local farmer committees of the AAA, dominated as they were by cotton planters and other large farmers, clearly belong in cell number 1. The operation of the FSA, the efforts of the Office of Civil Rights, and the stationing of Federal Voting Examiners in the South under the provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, on the other hand, were



clear interventions by the non-local state on behalf of the subordinated black minority. As such, these elements of state structure belong in cell 3. Cell 2 can be illustrated by the operation of the Department of Justice under President Nixon and the anti-black activities of the FBI throughout much of the 1960s. Both are examples of non-local state structures which tended to maintain the distribution of power in southern localities during the '60s and early '70s. Successful black voter registration drives and the election of blacks to public office are examples of transformative state structures which belong in cell 4.

During normal times, every locality is under the jurisdiction of an interlocking complex of local and non-local conservative state structures (cells 1 and 2). These conservative state structures protect and maintain, or at least do not threaten, the existing distribution of political and economic power of the localities in question; hence, no political crisis is experienced by the subject population. This formulation of the relationship between the state and political forces outside the state implies that the state is functionally compatible with the existing distribution of power in the locality. When an incompatibility does occur, exemplified by cell 3 or 4 of the typology, the struggle between contending forces and between these forces and the state ends with the defeat of one set of forces and/or the transformation of the state structure so that it is functionally compatible with the power distribution again (cells 1 and 2). Hence, the conditions of cells 3 and 4 are transient and always

evolve into the conditions of cells 1 and 2.

It is possible for the distribution of power outside the state to change in ways which do not affect the structure of the state. If the existing state structures are simultaneously functionally compatible with the existing dominant forces and the emerging dominant forces outside the state, no crisis will occur. The limits imposed on the state can be expanded or broadened without creating a political crisis if the existing state structures are compatible with both the previously dominant forces and the newly dominant forces. The fact that the limits on the state have been expanded would not be demonstrated until a new political crisis emerged which required the transformation of the state to the detriment of the old dominant force.

This scenario appears to provide the best explanation of the strength of the resistance to the black civil rights movement in the 1960s and the transformation of local state structures in the South as a result of that movement. The process began during the Great Depression when new local conservative state structures were created in a national effort to relieve the distress of the agricultural sector of the economy. The most important of these new state structures as far as the transformation of the southern rural class structure is concerned was the local committee system of the AAA which administered the farm commodity price support and acreage reduction programs. As will be developed in much greater detail in the chapters which follow, these local committees were dominated by cotton planters

and other large farmers, and tended to direct the major share of program benefits to themselves rather than to the tenants and croppers who cultivated the majority of the cotton. In the process, the class of cotton planters was converted into a class of capitalist farmers. Because many of the new capitalist farmers were the same people as the old cotton planters, and because the racial state was consistent with both plantation and capitalist agriculture, no political crisis occurred at the time. The political crisis occurred some thirty years later when the civil rights movement challenged the racial structure of the local state. By this time, very few cotton producers still operated tenant plantations, and those who did were weak both politically and economically. The movement was successful in restructuring the local state to remove many of its racially repressive features, but this result was by no means guaranteed. If the superordinate state had not intervened, the movement may well have been defeated. Such movements had always been defeated in the past. Why did the superordinate state intervene decisively this time to assist in the creation of transformative structures?

The superordinate state structures are related to the state structures of localities in complicated ways. First of all, the hierarchical relationship between the local state and the superordinate non-local state is based upon the superior authority and power of the superordinate state. During "normal times," the superordinate state exercises this power and authority without challenge. In an extreme case, that power might be called into

question or even interrupted, as it was during the Civil War. Thus, the superordinate state places limits of functional compatibility on the local state structures deployed in the various localities throughout the nation. In other words, the local state apparatuses of the various localities must establish political order compatible with the superordinate state or a political crisis will occur. This crisis may have a regional cast to it if the local state actions which are not compatible with the superordinate state are responding to political forces unique to particular regions.

At the same time, the local (and non-local) state structure of particular localities is the lower level of a hierarchy of state structures which guarantee an adequate flow of personnel and resources to maintain and reproduce the superordinate structures. It is by interrupting this flow of personnel and resources that local political forces call into question the power and authority of the superordinate state. Hence the local (and non-local) state of a locality determines the superordinate state in that it either functions to maintain the superordinate state or it doesn't. Of course, this causal effect is a complicated one which involves an aggregation of the effects from all local state structures.

Up to this point, I have been intentionally vague concerning the nature of the political forces which place constraints on the structure of the state. It is now appropriate to make these forces more explicit.

### Political Forces and Class Structure

Organization is the chief mechanism through which individuals concentrate human and material resources into effective political forces capable of engaging in combat with competitive forces and/or changing the structure of the state. Which segments of the population and what kinds of resources can be mobilized depend upon the political issues at stake. In this research, I will tend to focus on how the class interests of southern cotton planters rather than those of tenants and croppers were given effective voice through various organizations and how those organizations affected state structures. For research questions other than these, it may be appropriate to analyze the organization of interest groups organized around non-class issues and the political effects of those non-class based organizations. In many cases, however, and certainly for the questions considered here, class based organizations place the most important constraints on state structure.

There are several reasons for this. Successful organizations must continually mobilize new resources in order to bind organizational members to the organization. Thus, to a large extent, the effectiveness of voluntary organizations is a function of the class position of the members being organized. Poor people have few resources to dedicate to chancy organizations which may or may not effectively represent their interests. Many non-class based interest groups face this problem and have difficulty in maintaining the necessary supply of resources required for organizational

effectiveness. Of course, voluntary class-based organizations face similar problems to the extent that they are based upon the classes which have few surplus resources, human or material, to dedicate to the organization. Thus, the dominant economic classes usually have a competitive advantage in the amount of resources which can be directed toward political organization and activities.

Of greater importance are the non-voluntary class based organizations. These include economic organizations of all kinds: banks, cotton plantations, corporations, etc. These organizations produce a revenue stream which provides the income necessary for their members' support and, simultaneously, create an economic surplus which can be used for political ends by the owners of such organizations. Even if the owners do not engage in direct political action of any kind, large scale businesses have indirect political effects. No state can formulate policy while ignoring the possibility of capital strikes, capital flight to other areas, or plant closings by important local businesses. For example, the main source of state revenue in the Mississippi Delta after the Civil War was the property tax. In order to preserve this tax base, Mississippi encouraged land speculation and thereby indirectly encouraged the creation of the large cotton plantations which came to dominate the Delta by the beginning of the twentieth century (Brandfon 1967). In the plantation South, land was the primary source of state revenue and the most important collateral for long-term credit. And the value of land was dramatically increased to the extent that it produced cotton. If the

state failed to take these facts into consideration, it would jeopardize its own revenue base and the source of its stability.

Cotton plantation organization was the key determinant of the southern state structure. It separated cotton planters from tenants and sharecroppers, and determined the material resources accruing to each class. In most cases after the Civil War and before 1933, croppers and tenants barely realized subsistence income, whereas planters usually did better. The advantage in wealth and income enjoyed by planters made it more likely that they would be able to create effective political organizations. Even in the absence of overt political organization, the indirect effects of plantation organization placed constraints on the state which were difficult for state personnel to ignore. Thus, the class structure of cotton plantation agriculture had both direct and indirect impacts on the typical state structures of the South.

I have excluded from my definition of state structure those organizations which attempt to influence or transform the state. These include political parties and movement organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, White Citizens' Councils, Civil Rights Organizations, and other interest group organizations such as the Farm Bureau, the National Cotton Council, and the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Of course, the boundaries between state structure and other organizations with political purposes are often indistinct. Throughout post-Civil War southern history, the Ku Klux Klan frequently operated as a branch of the local state structure and directed a great deal of violence and

coercion against blacks with the approval of if not the explicit cooperation of the local policing organizations. The exercise of police power by the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacy organizations was a southern expedient designed to preclude the intervention of the federal government on behalf of the subordinated black population. For example, the Mississippi Legislature created the State Sovereignty Commission in 1956 which conducted public relations campaigns for segregative practices, hired investigators to report on subversive (civil rights) activities, and channelled state funds to the Citizens' Councils (Silver 1966:8). The Sovereignty Commission was still at work in the 1970s. In fact, one of the central issues addressed by southern Civil Rights organizations was whether white supremacy organizations would continue to exist as legitimate extensions of local police authority, or whether they would be branded as outlaws and suppressed by the police.

Although the boundaries of the state may be unclear at times, it is possible to make a theoretical distinction between the state and the subjects of the state--in other words, those individuals, organized or not, who must submit to the authority of the state. Conflicts between individuals or groups in society are always mediated by the state either directly or indirectly. For example, a contract dispute between a cotton planter and a black cropper may have been decided in the planter's favor because the cropper was afraid to press a claim against the planter. The black cropper's fear was founded upon the knowledge that the state was unlikely to (1) find in the



cropper's favor, and (2) protect the cropper from reprisals by the planter. Thus, the dispute was indirectly adjudicated by the state.

The state in this example was far from a neutral arbiter of disputes between contending forces outside the state. As has been argued above, the state is constrained and shaped by these conflicts in favor of the victor. It follows that state structures must always be the target, implicitly or explicitly, of social movements or other organized interests which intend to alter the distribution of power in society to their benefit. To the extent that movements or other organized interest groups are successful in their efforts, state structures are altered in ways which favor those groups. Because state structures have stability over time, certain interests may still be protected against their competitors well after they are too weak to adequately defend themselves in direct confrontation with their competition.

This example also illustrates the fact that the state decisively affects the relationships between contending parties whether or not they view the state as being legitimate. Subjects' views of the state vary between active support and fatalistic acquiescence during normal times. Southern blacks almost universally despised the racist nature of southern state structures and privately expressed their belief in the illegality of that state. Nevertheless, fear of physical reprisal by whites or agents of the state prevented most from expressing open opposition to it.

In summary, the most important political forces are class based

organizations and they come in two types: voluntary organizations with an explicitly political purpose, and economic organizations without an explicitly political purpose but with important indirect effects. Through these organizations, class structures constrain state structures in ways which tend to favor the interests of the dominant classes. Economic organizations (1) have indirect effects on the state, and (2) provide an economic surplus which members of the owning class can use to create voluntary organizations in defense of their interests. By contrast, the subordinate classes must rely on voluntary organizations to defend their interests, and usually have meager resources with which to maintain them. Given these considerations, it is not surprising that economic crises frequently do not generate political crises, especially if the subordinate classes are suffering acutely from the economic crisis.

The causal relations between the state and the economy developed here are illustrated in schematic form in Figure 1.1. The inspiration for this representation is provided by Erik Wright (1978:9-19). The principal innovation here is the distinction between local and non-local state structures unique to particular localities. In other words, it calls attention to the fact that state structures which have real effects on the economic processes of particular localities, and therefore on the class structure of those localities are not perfectly coordinated, but vary in the degree to which components of those structures are dominated by political forces with bases in the class structure of the localities. Of course, the causal relations

represented here are simplified representations of a complicated reality. The diagram might be elaborated to include the various types of causal relations suggested by Wright, but this simplified version seems adequate for the present purposes.

#### The Structural Determination Thesis

If the source of prejudicial attitudes is to be incorporated into the theory of discriminatory behavior, then the conditions which reproduce those attitudes, give them daily validity, and prevent their disappearance over time must be identified and explained. Barrington Moore has argued that "...to take values as the starting point of sociological explanation makes it very difficult to understand the obvious fact that values change in response to circumstances" (1966:487).

A promising starting point for this theory is suggested by the materialist premise that being takes priority over thought, that the real enjoys primacy over knowledge of the real (Poulantzas 1973:12). In its baldest terms, this premise is contained in the famous passage by Marx:

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society--the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their

consciousness. (1959:43)

With regard to the more specific case of racial prejudice and discrimination, this premise is contained in the work of theorists who suggest that changes in behavior often lead to changes in attitudes. Pettigrew, for example, states that law changes the cognitive states of individuals by first modifying behavior and "...this modified behavior in turn changes men's hearts and minds" (1976:526). (He also notes that this sequence is precisely the opposite of that which is commonly thought to be the most effective method of social change.) Allport argues that Jim Crow laws in the South "in large part created folkways" rather than the reverse (1958:438).

Legislation aims not at controlling prejudice, but only its open expression. But when expression changes, thoughts too, in the long run, are likely to fall into line. (Allport 1958:437)

If the unidimensionality of economic determinism is to be avoided, what is meant by "determination" must be clarified and the causal interconnection between economic, political, and sociocultural processes specified. Determination in the sense employed here does not imply causation in a one-to-one sequence in which perfect predictability could in principle be obtained, as Matthews and Prothro apparently think (1966:110). Wright (1978) has identified a number of different types of structural causation which have been incorporated within sociological theories and in particular within recent Marxist theory of the so-called structural variety. The type of paramount interest here is one identified as "structural limitation." Although not a new concept (e.g., Merton 1968:106-107), Wright's definition is

particularly useful:

"(Structural limitation) constitutes a pattern of determination in which some social structure establishes limits within which some other structure or process can vary, and establishes probabilities for the specific structures or processes that are possible within those limits. That is, structural limitation implies that certain forms of the determined structure have been excluded entirely and some possible forms are more likely than others." (1978:15-16)

A second important type of structural determination is one which Wright calls "limits of functional compatibility" (1978:19-20). The notion that social structures must be functionally compatible with each other is also not a new concept. The innovation here is to assert that there is an asymmetric relationship between social structures in which one structure determines the limits within which another structure can vary and still be functionally compatible with the reproduction of the first structure. Thus, Marxist theories of the state assert that the economic structure determines which forms of the state will tend to reproduce that economic structure and which forms will tend to lead to its transformation. One elaboration which I will add to this schema is that the state consists of a hierarchy of political structures in which the national state sets structural limits on subordinate regional and local political structures as well as limits of functional compatibility on these structures. Thus, local political structures evolve under the dual determination of local economic structures and the national state. Furthermore, the limits imposed by these determining structures are seldom coterminous.

One characteristic of structural limits is that they are typically

invisible to actors or observers except during those periods in which they are challenged or exceeded. The actions of some individuals or groups may not be effectively constrained by these limits, but most are. For example, the structural prohibition against the exercise of the franchise by blacks may not be so absolute that all blacks are effectively constrained. Nevertheless, under the limits imposed on the local political structures of the South during the first half of the twentieth century, by far the majority of blacks were unable to register or vote. When the behavior of significant numbers of individuals exceeds the limitations imposed, crises are created which result in the transformation of the pertinent structures (and the implied limits of those structures) or the movements which challenged those limits are defeated and the behavior of individuals is returned to the pre-established limits.

Of course, it is the action of people which transforms and modifies these structures. Perhaps the most common transformation of these structures occurs through the "unanticipated consequences of purposive social action" (Merton 1936) during the course of individuals pursuing everyday practical concerns. Far less frequently are structures transformed as a result of the actions of social movements composed of individuals who see the structures as illegitimate and proceed on the basis of their ideas of "what should be" rather than "what is."

The Marxist assertion of the primacy of the economic structure can be justified in part by a consideration of the importance of that

structure in shaping the routine of everyday life for members of society. First of all, the routines of everyday life have historically been structured around the concrete labor process necessary to obtain a livelihood. The primacy of the work routine (or job requirements) divides the day into two parts: that part necessary to satisfy the exigencies of the income producing labor process and the remainder which can be devoted to activities of the worker's choosing. Historically, this remainder has typically been very small, especially under the extreme forms of coercive labor control such as slavery. Job conditions also exert great influence on where and under what conditions people shall live and even the nature and quality of the social relationships laborers can develop with other laborers both on and off the job. In the cotton South, for example, geographers have noted the change in the spatial organization of the cotton plantation as the dominant economic class structure changed from slavery to tenant farming to modern capitalist farming (Prunty 1955). Under slavery, laborers lived in group quarters and worked the fields in gangs subject to the immediate discipline of the plantation manager. With the transition to sharecropping and tenancy, the living quarters of workers were dispersed over the area of the plantation. Farm workers usually tilled the fields alone or in family groups and had more autonomy in deciding when to work or not, but they were still under considerable control of the planter. With the development of capitalist cotton agriculture, workers lived in towns and cities instead of on the plantation, worked the fields singly or in very

small groups with the assistance of machines and had greater control over their private lives during off-work hours.

Of crucial importance for the materialist premise of the primacy of being over thought is that the pattern of behavior determined primarily by economic processes appears to members of society as a natural, immutable process rather than a historically contingent process of their own creation. Most of the behavior of the "everyday" is non-reflective, automatic, and replicated day after day, year after year. Just as people do not choose the society into which they will be born or the period of history in which they will live, neither do they routinely submit their daily lives to critical review to arrive at life plans.

"In the everyday, the activity and way of life are transformed into an instinctive, subconscious, unconscious and unreflected mechanism of acting and living: things, people, movements, tasks, environment, the world--they are not perceived in their originality and authenticity, they are not tested and discovered but they simply are there, and are accepted as inventory, as components of a known world." (Kosik 1976:43)

This patterned behavior is often unconscious in the sense of being largely unremembered because it is unexceptional as part of the familiar daily routine. It is performed in the same mental state as that of the individual who, having safely maneuvered an automobile over a stretch of highway, performing automatically to keep the car safely centered within the limits of curb and centerline, is jarred back to consciousness by a traffic light and is unable to recall the details of the preceding period of driving.



People develop a practical competence to survive within the limits of the "everyday." According to Kosik,

"(t)he everyday is the organizing of time and the rhythm which govern the unfolding of individual life histories....It has its replicability but also its special occasions, its routine but also its festivity....Death, sickness, births, successes and failures are all accountable events of everyday life." (1976:43).

At the turn of the century, a person could travel hundreds of miles in any direction in the deep South and find little to disrupt the seeming "naturalness" of the subordination of blacks and the production of cotton by sharecroppers and tenants. Travel was difficult and slow, towns and cities were few, and electronic media did not bombard the individual with accounts and representations of distant events. The cotton economy created an everyday for millions of southerners.

"Inasmuch as the everyday represents the organizing of millions of people's lives into a regular and replicable rhythm of work, action and life, it is disrupted only when millions of people are jolted out of this rhythm." (Kosik 1976:43)

War can disrupt the everyday by destroying the familiarity of the world, and so can social movements that change people's perception of the world. A contention of this research is that the black civil rights movement of the 1960s provided for its members such a reorientation of the ordinary and familiar.

#### Southern Race Relations and State Structure: The Argument in Brief

The proof of any theory such as the one presented here is its usefulness as a tool for understanding some past or present social reality. While I believe that the theory has quite general

applicability to the states of the advanced societies, the remainder of this dissertation is an attempt to explain the transformation of southern politics since 1930, especially with respect to race relations, from this theoretical point of view. To the extent that this attempt is successful, the plausibility of this theory of the relationship between the state and the economy is enhanced.

My choice of the South as the subject of this investigation is not an innocent one. The transformation of southern politics has had enormous implications for national politics, as the election of Jimmy Carter to the Presidency in 1976 made clear. Carter was one of the new deep South politicians who are "liberal" on the race issue. Although his commitment to the cause of black social and economic progress can be questioned, he could never have been elected without the support of the black electorate in both the North and the South. His moderation on the race issue made that possible. Furthermore, the southern civil rights movement was the precursor of, and in many ways the generative influence on, the anti-war, the women's liberation, and the gay rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. These movements had a tremendous impact on national politics and their influence, although reduced, is still being felt. Thus, much of practical political importance can be gained by a study of the transformation of southern politics. Finally, the magnitude of the changes in southern state and class structure has been quite large. Perhaps no other region of the U.S. has experienced such dramatic changes, with the exception of the South itself immediately after the Civil War. Although the changes

were great, they were not uniform across the South. Just as the production of cotton was differentially distributed over the South, so was the resistance to the civil rights movement. The richness of the variation and the magnitude of the change of the structures under investigation make the transformation of southern politics extremely useful both for illustrative purposes and as a test of the theory proposed above.

In its present form, the theory makes strong statements concerning the general relationship between the state and the economy. If the theory is correct, this relationship must hold even if the state or the economy or both are in a process of transformation. The theory does not make any predictions as to what forces or conditions generate changes in the system. It does predict that political crises are likely if the state or the economy is transformed in such a manner that a functional incompatibility occurs between the two. In capitalist societies, it is usually the case that the economy is in a more continuous and dynamic state of change than is the state. The need for continuous innovation as a condition for survival as a capitalist is the motive force behind capitalist economic transformation. The state, by contrast, has no such internal dynamic, or, at best, a very weak one. The biggest changes in the structure of the state in this country have not occurred as a result of a gradual and regular process of some kind, but as dramatic shifts in times of political crisis. For instance, periods of great political crisis, the Civil War, the Great Depression, and World War II, led to greater

centralization of executive power at the federal level and the creation of more and larger agencies for the execution of that power.

In order to put the theory in a form suitable for testing, it is necessary to choose the object of study and to specify the initial conditions, so to speak, through an inspection of the historical record. The primary object of this investigation is the local state structure of the South. Thus, the national state structure of the United States is presupposed. Similarly, some aspects of the southern economic structure are external to this study. The southern rural class structure, by contrast, will be studied in some depth because of its central importance in establishing the controlling limits on southern state structures and because of the state's role in its transformation.

By setting the initial conditions, I mean that the nature of the relationship between the state and the economy at the beginning of the period under investigation will be taken for granted. It is a datum on which the remainder of the study is based. This task is mainly a descriptive one and is the subject of the next chapter.

The remainder of this dissertation will trace the transformation of southern state structures from those typical of the pre-Depression era to those typical of the mid-1970s. Two critical points in this process will be identified: the creation of new state structures during the 1930s and again during the 1960s. During both of these periods the federal government created new state structures which affected southern state structures, but with very different results in

the two cases. In terms of the typology developed above, during the 1930s local conservative state structures were created which contributed to the political and economic subordination of blacks, although in a different way than was the case with those state structures already in place. During the 1960s, non-local transformative state structures were created which greatly diminished the amount of state-sanctioned violence directed against blacks. In an interesting way, the success of the second intervention depended upon success of the first. Specifically, the creation of the conservative state structures during the 1930s (the local offices of the AAA) eventually led to the transformation of the rural class structure of the cotton South in a way which never threatened the interests of power of the people who occupied dominant class positions in the rural South, namely those who were converted from cotton planters to capitalist farmers. By the 1960s, the class of capitalist farmers had a much smaller stake in the continued subordination of blacks than did the old class of cotton planters. Consequently, the relatively mild intervention of the federal government triggered by the civil rights movement of the 1960s was sufficient to provide a substantial guarantee of the extension of citizenship rights to blacks. By contrast, a much more powerful and extended intervention immediately after the Civil War was required to prevent the reimplementaion of slavery, although it was unable to completely protect the citizenship rights of blacks.

In order to establish the critical nature of these two periods, a

variety of data will be introduced and a number of inter-related propositions deriving from the theory of the state will be tested. Because the usefulness of the theory depends upon its ability to account for a number of different phenomena in a parsimonious manner, it seems appropriate to present the logic of the overall argument here in schematic form. Each of the components of the argument can then be seen in relation to the others and can be evaluated according to its role in the overall argument when it is developed in greater detail in the chapters which follow.

The purpose of Chapter Two is to describe the functional relationship between southern state structure and the southern rural class structure which prevailed prior to the Great Depression of the 1930s. The cotton plantation was the decisive unit of production in the South. The preponderant direct and indirect importance of cotton production, both in dollar value and number of people employed, as compared to all other forms of economic activity, reached a peak during the first quarter of this century. No other regional economy in the U.S. has ever been so dominated by a single crop as was the South by King Cotton. Consequently, the class relations of cotton plantation agriculture exerted an enormous effect on southern state structure.

The cotton plantation was based upon the subordination of black agricultural labor--primarily tenants and sharecroppers. The crucial aspect of the class relationship between planters and their tenants and croppers was the imperative to use physical force and coercion as

the primary method of labor control. Cotton agriculture was extremely labor intensive. Because it was not possible to increase the productivity of cotton plantation labor by the substitution of capital for labor, planters could not compete with the emerging class of southern industrialists over the price of labor. Consequently, the application of physical force and coercion to control the labor of tenants and croppers was the modal response of planters to the vagaries of the cotton market before 1933. The necessary connection between plantation agriculture and the use of physical force and coercion is introduced descriptively in Chapter Two and developed theoretically in Chapter Three.

The structure of the state in the South was fully compatible with the structure of cotton plantation agriculture. The continued profitability of cotton agriculture was predicated upon the political quiescence of the vast army of croppers and tenants who produced the cotton crop. Institutionalized racial segregation and racially repressive state structures had the effect of providing planters with a politically docile, predominantly black labor force, while whites were free to leave agriculture for industrial jobs at higher wages when the opportunity was provided by the growth of southern industry. Thus, the racial structure of the southern state tended to prevent the emergence of wide-spread, overt conflict along two major fault lines: one between planters and tenants over the control of agricultural labor, and one between planters and industrialists over the price of labor.

Of course, the functional necessity for a certain state structure does not guarantee its development. Nevertheless, a state structure compatible with the coercive labor control required by plantation agriculture did develop in the South. Notwithstanding the historians' caution concerning the validity of counterfactual historical arguments, it is difficult to imagine that plantation agriculture could have survived as long as it did in the absence of such a state. Citizenship rights for blacks would have posed a potent threat to the planters' control over tenants and croppers. Not surprisingly, and in contradiction to the popular image of the southern poor whites as the source of southern racism, there is considerable evidence that the plantation areas, rather than the southern hill counties or the cities, provided the bases for the political and social subordination of southern blacks. The political power and expertise of cotton planters that carried the South into secession and Civil War also presided over the disfranchisement and political subordination of blacks some thirty years later. Thus, the political power of planters rather than the racial fears of poor whites was the likely force which converted functional necessity into political fact. But regardless of the origins of the southern state structure, it did have a decisive effect on the determination of southern race relations as well as the production of a tractible plantation labor force. Consequently, Chapter Two concentrates on an analysis of the functional relationship between plantation agriculture and the racial repressiveness of the southern state structure, although some discussion of the origins of



those structures is necessary in order to place that relationship in historical perspective.

Even though the structure of the state in the South was functionally compatible with the southern rural class structure, that class structure was completely transformed during the four decades following the early 1930s. Chapter Three presents evidence that the transformation began during the Great Depression. Most accounts of this process maintain that it began during or immediately after World War II when a scarcity of agricultural labor or greater rewards for agricultural innovation encouraged southern planters to mechanize their operations. That the transformation began during the 1930s when the supply of agricultural labor was at its most plentiful and least expensive and the costs of mechanization were comparatively high, appears to create a problem for those accounts.

The transformation of the rural class structure had two inter-related components: (1) the transformation of labor intensive cotton agriculture to machine intensive agriculture in either cotton or some other agricultural commodity, and (2) the shift of plantation laborers into industrial occupations in both rural and urban areas as southern industry expanded. From the point of view of this analysis, the important change is the destruction of the cotton plantation class structure. Regardless of the class structure which replaced it. Machine intensive cotton agriculture, in contrast to plantation agriculture, shares a similar imperative to innovate with other forms of capitalist economic organization both inside and outside of

agriculture. This analysis will focus on the transformation of labor intensive cotton plantation agriculture into machine intensive cotton agriculture and will, thereby, document the process by which the plantation class structure was destroyed. It should be remembered, however, that this process would have been retarded in the absence of an expanding southern industrial economy which could accommodate, at least in part, the large numbers displaced from the plantation system.

At its core, the transformation of southern plantation class structure involved an adoption of innovation, and a replacement of many tenants and croppers with a few machine operators who were paid wages. From the point of view of the accounts which assume that farmers will adopt innovations when they are confronted with labor problems or the opportunity to reap larger gains by using improved machinery and methods, the adoption of innovation produced the transformation of the southern rural class structure. I believe that the actual process was just the reverse. I think that the transformation of the rural class structure produced a structural imperative to innovate where none (or at best a very weak impulse) had existed before. This argument is developed in detail in Chapter Three, beginning with a theoretical discussion of the relationship between innovation and the rural class structure of the South both before and after the transformation of cotton plantation agriculture. Then, two representative accounts of the transformation of southern agriculture are criticized from this point of view. The first is the econometric account of Richard H. Day (1967). The second is the

avowedly Marxist account of Jay R. Mandle (1978). Finally, a regression analysis of county level 1959 Census of Agriculture data indicates that on the eve of the civil rights revolution in the South, with the transformation of cotton agriculture almost complete, cotton farming was still the most important determinant of black tenancy rates.

The purpose of Chapter Four is to establish why the transformation of southern agriculture began during the early 1930s rather than some other period. As argued in the first two chapters, the class structure of plantation agriculture contained little or no imperative to innovate, and the state structure protected and maintained that class structure by enforcing racial segregation and denying citizenship rights to blacks. The depression had driven cotton prices so low that the cotton economy was in desperate straits. Force and coercion were no longer sufficient to guarantee an adequate return to planters, much less to their tenants and croppers. Yet there was still no strong impetus to innovate, as the evidence analyzed in Chapter Three makes clear. The intervention which broke the organic relationship between cotton agriculture and the use of physical force and coercion was the creation of the New Deal crop reduction and farm commodity price support programs administered through the local committee system of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

Chapter Four analyzes the creation of the AAA committee system and indicates how it was converted into a component of local

conservative state structure through the power and influence of cotton planters. Tenants, croppers and blacks were excluded from any position of influence on those committees from 1933 until well into the 1960s. Although the national regulations of the AAA prohibited the displacement of tenants and required a fair division of price support payments between landlords and tenants, with no enforcement of those regulations displacement proceeded apace. Resistance by organizations of tenants such as the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the Alabama Sharecroppers' Union was brutally repressed by state-sanctioned violence and coercion of planters and their allies. Tenants and croppers were removed from the land, and in their place remained a much smaller number of agricultural wage laborers. Thus, the creation of new local conservative state structures during the New Deal led to the eventual transformation of the class structure which had determined the nature of the new state structure in the first place. The extent to which rural blacks could respond to the World War II demand for urban labor provided dramatic evidence of the transformation of the plantation class structure.

Although by 1960 the coercion of black agricultural labor was no longer essential for the survival of southern cotton agriculture, it was not incompatible with it either. Capitalist farmers, like other capitalist employers, could respond to the demands of labor with greater flexibility than could the old cotton planter. Force and coercion were possible options, but the most viable long term strategy was to increase the productivity of labor by the adoption of improved

techniques, machines, and crop varieties. Nevertheless, the racially repressive state structures of the South remained in place until they were radically transformed by the superordinate state under the intense pressure of the southern civil rights movement of the 1960s.

A key indicator of the racially repressive structure of the southern state is the restriction on the black franchise. The strongest support for disfranchising blacks was always found in the cotton plantation areas. For example, Alabama was the only state to submit its disfranchising constitution to the voters for approval. The referendum took place in 1901 and the cotton belt counties gave it overwhelming support, whereas the hill counties voted against it. If the 21 counties with black majorities (i.e., the most important plantation counties) of the 67 Alabama counties had been excluded, the disfranchising constitution would have failed of ratification. Voting fraud was so blatant that seven counties with more than 70 percent black population cast more votes for the constitution than there were white voters in the county, implying that, if there had been no fraud, blacks voted to disfranchise themselves. Thus, the racially repressive state structures were extended to the non-plantation counties of the South and, by the 1930s, blacks were almost completely disfranchised.

A series of court victories from the 1940s on chipped away at the legal barriers to the registration of blacks, and they began to regain the franchise in areas not dominated by the cotton economy. By 1960, black voter registration had reached a plateau of some 25 percent of

the eligible electorate and was concentrated in the border states and southern cities outside the core areas of the old cotton belt. Black civil rights leaders recognized the central role which voting plays in the United States as the principal means for requiring the state to be minimally responsive to the needs of broadly based interest groups. Voter registration drives were launched all over the South as part of the movement's massive attack on the racial structure of the southern state. The prolonged assault by the civil rights movement finally triggered intervention by the federal government, and the racial structure of the southern state was dramatically transformed. Local and non-local transformative structures were created which led to substantial enfranchisement of blacks even in the core areas of the cotton belt. The remainder of this dissertation is an attempt to understand that transformation as it is indicated by black voter registration rates.

Chapter Five is based upon an analysis of county level voter registration data for 1959 and 1964. As expected, elements of the rural class structure typical of the plantation South were the most important in depressing black voter registration rates as compared to white rates. These effects persisted even in the presence of controls suggested by various theories of discrimination and other analyses of voter registration rates. Even though substantial numbers of blacks were registered between 1959 and 1964, the rural class structure still exerted the most important influence on black vs. white voter registration rates.

Chapter Six reports the results of the analysis of two similar panels of data for periods after the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the intervention of the federal government to protect black citizenship rights. For the first time, other factors became more important than the rural class structure in the determination of black vs. white voter registration rates. Clearly, the structure of the southern state had been transformed and the systematic selection of blacks as a preferential target of state sanctioned violence and coercion was greatly diminished. The civil rights movement of the 1960s was an attack on the southern racially repressive structure of the state. Its success spelled the end of labor intensive cotton agriculture wherever it still existed, but posed no real threat to the new class of capitalist farmers who produced cotton and other crops with the most advanced methods and machines.

The data analyses reported in Chapters Five and Six provide empirical support for the theory proposed in this chapter, as well as justification for my interpretation of the importance of the transformation of the class structure typical of cotton plantation agriculture for the eventual transformation of southern politics. Opposition to black suffrage crumbled first in those areas outside the cotton belt. Then, as Martin Luther King first observed in Birmingham in 1963, white popular resistance to the civil rights movement diminished dramatically although the state remained adamantly opposed to it and its demand for citizenship rights for blacks. Finally, with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act

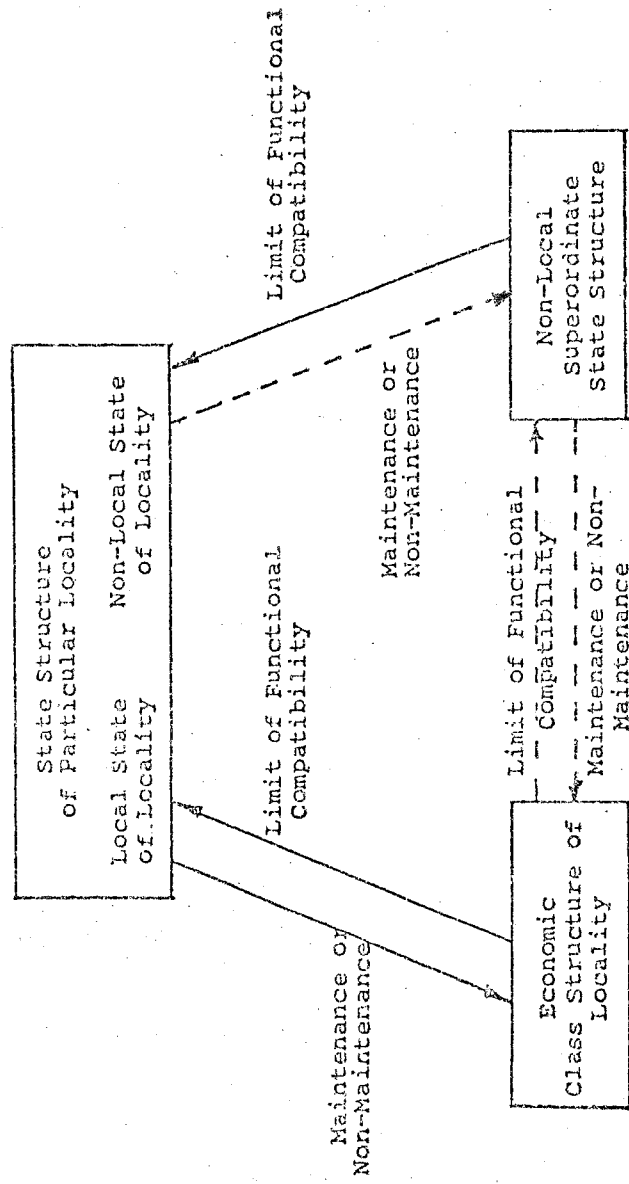
of 1965, state sanctioned resistance to black citizenship rights was dramatically reduced even in the cotton belt, although, as the concluding chapter points out, it wasn't completely eliminated. The class structure of cotton plantation agriculture had imposed its imperative on the state and the state continued to enforce that imperative even after the cotton economy had been so transformed that it no longer required it. Thus, the success of the civil rights movement was to a significant degree structurally determined. It could not have prevailed if it had been launched at some earlier period when the fortunes of cotton planters all over the South were intimately connected to the subordination of black agricultural labor.



Table 1.1. Types of State Structure in Localities  
(Local Areas)

	State Structures of the Locality Dominated by:		
		Local Forces	Non-Local Forces via super-ordinate state
Effects of State Structure on the Distribution of Political Power of the Locality	Tends to Maintain	Local Conservative	Non-Local Conservative
	Tends to Transform	Local Transformative	Non-Local Transformative

Figure 1.1: Causal Relations between the the Structure of the State and Economic Class Structure.



The broken lines indicate complicated summing processes from many different localities to the State and national level.