

Less is More:

A Cross-Generational Analysis of the Nature and Role of Racial Attitudes in the 21st Century

Christopher D. DeSante, Indiana University at Bloomington¹

Candis Watts Smith, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Abstract

After landmark Civil Rights legislation was implemented, scholars provided evidence that the nature and structure of Whites' racial attitudes changed from the Jim Crow era. These researchers devised survey questions to capture newer, more acceptable forms of racial animus. One scale that came out of this effort and that receives the most empirical attention today is the racial resentment scale. Given the vast changes the American racial landscape has undergone since that scale was originally developed, we question whether this set of measures is related to racial attitudes in the same way across generational cohorts. We hypothesize that due to their socialization and life experiences, younger whites might be answering these questions in systematically different ways. Using several large data sets, we reach two important conclusions. First, younger Whites are not yet bringing about any meaningful change in the aggregate levels of racial resentment. Second, and more importantly, we show that while younger Whites appear to have lower levels of racial resentment, these survey items are more strongly related to old-fashioned anti-black affect among younger Whites. Thus, when it comes to Millennials' racial attitudes, "less is more."

¹ Corresponding author; cdesante@indiana.edu

“Will Racism End When Old Bigots Die?”

“Will Racism End When Old Bigots Die?” That was a question posed by National Public Radio’s *Code Switch* in early 2017, just a few weeks before Donald Trump was inaugurated. In the first year of his term, America has witnessed a groundswell of overtly racist behavior. This was perhaps most starkly demonstrated by the August 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. This rally left 30 people injured and one young woman, Heather Heyer, dead when a vehicle intentionally ran over the counter-protestors. When Trump initially commented on these events, he failed to explicitly denounce the white nationalists and shifted blame to the counter-protestors, saying there was “hatred, bigotry, and violence on many sides.” Perhaps one looks at Trump, a white man in his early 70s, and attributes his comments to the thinking of a bygone era; an older generation whose beliefs are not long for this world. After all, if older whites are the ones who are the most prejudiced, we may hope that newer generations could turn the tide of racial attitudes in the United States. In this paper we demonstrate, in several different ways, that this simply is not the case. Younger whites, those who are part of the Millennial generation (born after 1979), may *appear* to have lower levels of racial prejudice, but these attitudes are more strongly linked to old-fashioned racial stereotypes than for older whites. In this sense, “*less is more*:” while the average level of racial resentment is lower among Millennials, the variance in the measure matters much more for explaining their attitudes. Take, for example, the 54% of whites aged 18-29 who voted for Barack Obama in 2008; in 2012 that number fell to just 44%. In 2016, just 43% of whites under 30 voted for the Democratic nominee. Why does it seem that the popular narrative is that younger whites will usher in some post-racial American utopia?

This paper proceeds in five parts. First, we briefly discuss the modern “post-racial” America narrative and summarize how social scientists have measured racial attitudes in the mass public. Next, we explain why we believe younger whites may be answering these survey items in systematically different ways. Third, we illustrate how relatively stable Whites’ level of racial resentment has been over the last 30 years and show that the changes are unlikely to be attributed to generational replacement. Fourth, we examine whether racial resentment is related to “old-fashioned racism” identically across this generational divide. Finally, we conclude that, without properly correcting for how these measures operate across generations, scholars may incorrectly conclude that younger whites are *less* racially prejudiced.

Racial Attitudes in the Obama Era

In the pursuit of some color-blind America, it would seem that younger Whites “see race” less and less. Journalist Tim Rutten summarized this phenomenon, explaining generational differences with regards to thinking about race: “[President Obama] personifies and articulates the post-racial America in which most of our young people live... skin color is no longer a physical marker for most of them. By and large, our sons and daughters describe their friends as tall or short, funny or serious, as good students or poor athletes, but seldom—as earlier generations would have done—as a ‘Black guy’ or a ‘White girl’” (2008). Even the Pew Research Center (2010) has asserted that the Millennial generation is the most racially tolerant generation in history; as the Millennial generation was more likely than any other to approve of interracial marriage and interracial dating. It’s also the most racially diverse generation, with only 55% of Millennials identifying as White compared to approximately 75% of Baby Boomers.

These findings fit a post-racial narrative—that race and racism are no longer important in this country and this is due to those younger Whites who have been socialized to overcome racial prejudice. However, we take these findings as evidence of a fundamental misunderstanding of race and racism in the United States, not as a signal that Whites’ attitudes have significantly shifted. First, these kinds of explanations focus mainly on survey items and ignore institutional and structural inequalities (cf. Bonilla-Silva 1997). Secondly, both polling centers and the media rely on relatively antiquated measures of racial prejudice. Commonly, these items tap into old-fashioned racism – asking about social distance or stereotypes – questions that are either prone to social desirability bias or no longer controversial. For example, most Americans approve of interracial contact and disdain racial discrimination, or are unwilling to publically admit otherwise (Schuman et al. 1997). As others have argued previously, and because we know that expressions of racial animus have evolved over time, our measures of racial attitudes must also change.

There was a significant decline in “biological racism” (a belief that Whites are biologically superior to Blacks) between the 1940s and 1970s, but by the late 1970s and early 1980s, scholars noticed that even though an increasing proportion of White Americans supported formal principles of (racial) equality, their support for implementing public policies aimed at achieving equality was lackluster. Researchers also noted that the implementation of these policies seemed to stimulate new configurations of racial attitudes. In that context, scholars embarked on a conceptual enterprise to determine whether the existing measures of racial attitudes (e.g. social distance, biological racism) were still relevant and useful in measuring racial attitudes or predicting political attitudes and behaviors. Out of this effort, concepts and theories such as symbolic racism (Sears and

Kinder 1970, Sears 1988, Henry and Sears 2002), racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996), and many others (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997, Dovidio 2001, McConohay 1986, Pettigrew and Meertens 1995, Banks and Valentino 2012) were developed. In their own ways, these scales sought to describe new forms of racial attitudes, as well as the socially acceptable expressions of prejudice more accurately.²

Racial resentment, in particular, has garnered substantial attention in political science. Scholars noted that prior to the Civil Rights Movement, the “race problem” in America was marked by unequal opportunity, discrimination, and lack of enforcement of constitutional rights. After the late 1960s, the race problem centered on the threat that Blacks posed to the social order. More specifically, Kinder and Sanders (1996) explain that after the Watts riots, and others like it, Whites were increasingly likely to suggest that Blacks lagged behind Whites on important socioeconomic indicators because of their failure to live up to core American values. This reinterpretation of the American “race problem” is the foundation of racial resentment, as Kinder and Sears explain:

[Racial Resentment is] a blend of affect and the kind of traditional American values embodied in the Protestant Ethic. [This attitude] represents a form of resistance to change in the racial status quo based on moral feelings that Blacks violate such traditional American values as individualism and self-reliance, the work ethic, obedience, and discipline (1981, 416).

It is important for our purposes to note that the validity of racial resentment appears to have stood the test of time; a number of studies have shown that racial resentment influences Whites’ attitudes on the death penalty (Unnever and Cullen 2007), social welfare

² Social psychological research suggests that a more subtle and covert form of racism had developed among the American population, and there have been many labels for this form of covert racism: aversive racism (Dovidio 2001); symbolic racism (Kinder and Sears 1981); racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996); *lassiez-faire* racism (Bobo, Kluegel, and Smith 1997); modern racism (McConohay 1986); and subtle racism (Pettigrew and Meertens 1995) to name a few.

policies (Kinder and Mendelberg 2000), affirmative action (Bobo 2000), vote choice (Kinder and Sears 1981, Tesler and Sears 2010, Tesler 2016), who is deserving of governmental help (DeSante 2013), and many more.

There are, however, critics of this measure (Kluegel and Bobo 1993, Sniderman, Crosby, and Howell 2000, Sniderman and Piazza 1993, Sniderman and Tetlock 1986, Stoker 1998, Wilson and Davis 2011), who argue that the measure is tapping conservative values more than racial animus. While there have been a number of recent works (Tesler 2012a, Tesler 2012b, Tesler 2016) that show how racial resentment still relates to prejudicial attitudes in contemporary America, some see problems with the measure as it is correlated with conservative ideology (cf. Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo 2000).

We share a related concern with the racial resentment measures, but in a different context. Concepts like symbolic racism and racial resentment are based in the broader theory of symbolic politics, a theory that “holds that much adult political behavior results from symbolic predispositions *acquired before full adulthood*... and as reflecting the norms dominating the young individual’s informational environment” (Sears 1988). We are concerned with the extent to which these “new” measures remain relevant to, and accurately describe, the attitudes of younger White Americans. We are especially concerned with today’s youngest adult cohort – Millennials³ – those born between 1980 and 2000 who have lived the entirety of their lives in an America where *de jure* segregation is illegal, diversity is celebrated, minority political representation is unremarkable, and for whom skin color no longer serves as a “physical marker.” As a result, it could be that

³The Millennial Generation is composed of Americans born between 1980 and 2000. In this paper, we use the phrases “young Whites,” “younger Whites” and “Millennials” interchangeably. This is the youngest generation that we now see entering adulthood and respondent pools of nationally representative surveys of adults.

younger Whites' belief system is centered on the logic that since they have been told that race *should* not matter, they may now believe it *does* not matter. The implication is that Millennia Whites may have a belief system where the socially desirable levels of political correctness lead them to actively avoid discussing race and racism in America (Apfelbaum, Sommers, and Norton 2008, Bonilla-Silva 2014, Jackson 2008).

What Makes Millennials Different?

Considering how America's racial landscape and social norms have changed since the development of the racial resentment battery, it may be the case that these items are not necessarily capturing racial attitudes identically across generational cohorts, a unit of analysis often associated with attitudinal change (cf. Yang and Land 2013, Mannheim 1952). If the post-racial narrative is correct, and Millennials are less prejudiced than previous generations, we would expect that the most recent cohorts of Whites would exhibit lower levels of racial resentment. However, given how younger Whites have been socialized to avoid talking about race or revealing racially prejudiced opinions, the survey items we use might be operating differently across these groups. We believe this is worthy of examination for the simple reason that younger Whites have a different lived socio-historical experience, one absent of many landmark racial events and one in which they have been socialized to *not talk about race*.

Our theory is that younger Whites have life experiences that are unique, in two important ways, which differentiate them from previous generations. First, and similar to the logic behind the first wave of "new racism" work – times change, as do socially acceptable expressions of prejudice. The racial resentment battery was created at a particular historical moment, one that may be less salient to Whites of a certain age. For

example, one survey item asks how strongly a respondent agrees with the statement, “Irish, Italians, Jews and other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.” For members of the Silent Generation (those born between 1925 and 1945) or the Baby Boomers (1946-1964), the narrative of these specific immigrant groups might be more salient, if only due to the raw number of immigrants coming to America from, for example, Italy and Ireland. While those were some of the largest immigrant groups in the first half of the 20th century, those numbers dropped as African and Asian immigration grew exponentially in the second half of the century.⁴ This is what we would call the “*historical difference*,” younger Whites have had a different lived experience.

The second difference, which we call the “*psychosocial difference*,” concerns how Millennials have been socialized. This shift is largely marked by an increasing desire for political correctness and avoidance of race (Jackson 2008). The avoidance of discussing race largely stems from the perception that talking about race these days is “fraught with the risks of misunderstanding and social sanction;” the social norms of contemporary society guide Whites’ motivation to “avoid the appearance of prejudice” (Apfelbaum, Sommers, and Norton 2008, 918). Today, race and racial attitudes are more likely to be discussed in a “colorblind” way, if they are discussed at all. In some contexts, younger Whites might internalize a concern where even pointing out race may equate them to racists. Frankenberg explains that a colorblind perspective is a “mode of thinking about

⁴ Between 1900 and 1949, the United States granted permanent residence status to over 3.8 million Italians and over 750,000 Irish. From 1950 until 2000, those numbers drastically declined to about 671,000 and 184,000 respectively. Over those same periods, the number of African immigrants increased nearly twenty-fold, from 31,000 to nearly 600,000, and the number granted permanent resident status coming from Asia increased from 750,000 from 1900-1949 to approximately 7.1 million in the second half of the previous century.

race organized around an effort not to ‘see’ or at any rate not to acknowledge race differences,” as this is the “ ‘polite’ language of race” (1993, 142). An emerging consensus among scholars is that “colorblindness” (Bonilla-Silva 2014, Bonilla-Silva, Lewis, and Embrick 2004, Carr 1997, Forman 2006, Frankenberg 1993) is currently the basis for contemporary American racial ideology, and characterizes the environment in which young Whites have been socialized.⁵

Blinder (2007) has developed a theory of “two-tracked socialization,” which explains what we are likely to see empirically among young people. On the one hand, young Whites have been socialized to avoid discussing race, but this causes them cognitive dissonance because they do not have the language to explain racial inequalities. As such, we may see that young people are likely to either be incredibly supportive of symbols that demonstrate their anti-racism. However, it may also mean that they are less likely to pursue policies that ameliorate racial disparities because they lack a firm grasp on the role of institutional, systemic, and structural factors that serve to perpetuate racial disparities. In sum, the measures of racial attitudes that we use in political science may fail to capture the sentiments that arise from being socialized in an era of colorblindness, where younger Whites believe they are unfairly discriminated against on the basis of their race (Dietrich 2015).

⁵ Bonilla-Silva and Lewis (1999, 56) outline the elements that make up a colorblind racial structure; they are “(1) the increasingly covert nature of racial discourse and practices; (2) the avoidance of racial terminology and the ever growing claim by Whites that they experience ‘reverse racism’; (3) the elaboration of a racial agenda over political matters that eschews direct racial references; (4) the invisibility of most mechanisms that reproduce racial inequality; and finally, (5) the rearticulation of a number of racial practices characteristic of the Jim Crow period of race relations.” For a review of work on color-blindness, see Doane (2017)

In addition to the fact that these survey items reference specific historical events and racialized policies that lay outside of White Millennials' lived memory or knowledge (Dillon 2011), it is important to note that asking about race, and about "Blacks" specifically, raises social desirability red flags for younger respondents in a way that they do not for older Americans. When the racial resentment scale was developed "compared with most efforts to measure racial animosity, these questions... [appeared] rather subtle" (Kinder and Sanders 1996:106), but considering today's environment, these questions may miss the mark, as the mere mention of race is unacceptable, especially for younger Americans. Anecdotally, after the 2014 Midterm election, voters were reportedly taken aback by the questions that compose the racial resentment battery; some respondents felt that merely asking those questions implied that they were racists (Jordan 2014). Psychologists have also recorded this tendency to avoid talking about or even mentioning race. For example, Apfelbaum and his colleagues (Apfelbaum et al. 2008, Apfelbaum, Sommers, and Norton 2008) show that Whites adopt "strategic colorblindness," or an effort to completely avoid mentioning race even in a task where pointing out someone race is actually helpful. They also found that younger children (aged 8-9 years) are able to outperform older children in a basic categorization task, where acknowledgement of race facilitates performance. Their research reveals that children as young as ten years old recognize the potential social sanction of mentioning race and avoid doing so even at the expense of successfully completing a task. These scholars suggest that we may be seeing a "critical transition in human social development" around the issues of race and racism (Apfelbaum et al. 2008, 1513). We take all of this to mean that any expression of racial animus is more costly, both socially and psychologically, for the youngest members of the population. Thus, when a

young person admits to being racially resentful, it might be because the strength of these beliefs is overriding the pressures related to social desirability. In other words, it might take a higher level of racial animus for younger whites to agree, just as strongly as older Whites, that “*if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.*”

These two generational differences –historical and psychosocial – present us with an interesting opportunity to test two key hypotheses. The first hypothesis we will test is whether changes in aggregate levels of racial resentment can be attributed, to borrow Tesler’s term, to more “racially liberal” Whites entering the population. The second hypothesis stems from the psychosocial generational differences: compared to older Whites, Millennial Whites’ racial resentment may more closely resemble old-fashioned prejudice. Because we believe it is more difficult, *psychologically*, for younger whites to signal racial prejudice, when they do it might have a greater effect on related political attitudes.

If more prejudiced cohorts are being replaced, why is *racial resentment* so stable?

While it is true that the average level of racial resentment dropped over that time, how can we be sure that it is due to any particular cohort as opposed to general historical trends? Table 1, below, presents the average score on the four-item racial resentment battery whenever all four questions were asked on the American National Election Study (ANES). These scores have been recoded to run from 0-1 with higher scores indicating higher scores of racial resentment; for comparability we use only face-to-face interviews. As we can see, these means are remarkably stable: moving from a high of 0.64 (multiple years) to a low of 0.57 in 2016. As the ANES only interviews adults aged 18 or older, the first Millennial could have entered the survey in 1998, meaning the proportion of

respondents who are Millennials increased from just 1% in the 1998 wave to over 25% in 2016.

Table 1: Whites’ Levels of Racial Resentment 1986-2016

Year	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994
Mean	0.60	0.64	0.58	0.62	0.65
Year	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
Mean	0.64	0.64	0.65	0.64	0.57

In order to parse out the extent to which the change—or the lack thereof—in racial attitudes over time is due to cohort replacement, a primary mechanism of social change, rather than period effects or age effects we utilize a methodological tool called the “intrinsic estimator” designed for Age-Period-Cohort (APC) analysis. This estimation technique enables us to control for age, period, and cohort effects simultaneously; allowing us to understand the role that various generational/birth cohorts play in maintaining, exacerbating, or ameliorating racial animus in the United States. We would expect that older Whites, *ceteris paribus*, would exhibit higher levels of racial resentment. If some “post-racial” era has been ushered in due to “cohort replacement,” a premise Tesler and Sears (2010) and many others have challenged (Hutchings 2009, Piston 2010, Tesler 2012, Valentino and Brader 2011), we would expect to see lower levels of racial resentment in later periods as well as more recent birth cohorts.

Until relatively recently, research that centers on cohort replacement has traditionally been unable to disentangle cohort effects from period and age effects (Dowden and Robinson 1993, Hochschild, Weaver, and Burch 2012, Steeh and Schuman 1992). Similarly, those works that focus on macro-changes across time fail to discern period effects from cohort and age effects (Hunt 2007, Kluegel 1990, Schuman et al. 1997)

as it has been difficult for researchers to disentangle each from the others.⁶ We estimate APC effects with intrinsic estimator models (Yang, Fu, and Land 2004, Yang and Land 2013, Yang et al. 2008) as this statistical method overcomes the identification problem of APC models which typically employ non-arbitrary constraints.

Not only did previous methods require researchers to make strong assumptions about the data *a priori*, the resulting statistical estimates were sensitive to these choices (Yang, Fu, and Land 2004). In contrast, the intrinsic estimator does not depend on arbitrary adjacency constraints and yields robust estimates of trends by age, period and cohort.⁷ While this method is relatively new, it has been used by political scientists to explain changes in voting behavior (Stegmueller 2014), the effects of political socialization (Neundorf and Niemi 2014), changes in Blacks' explanations of racial disparities (Smith 2014), and various policy attitudes (DeSante 2017). As far as we know, ours is the first paper to apply the method to examine changes in Whites' racial attitudes.

For this particular estimation procedure, our data come from the 1986-2016 ANES datasets, with a total of 10,335 face-to-face respondents who identified as White and answered all four racial resentment items.⁸ As we showed above in Table 1, the commonly used racial resentment scale (the sum of the four items; ranging from 0-1) has hardly changed at the aggregate level over the last 30 years. Because we are interested in the cross-generational change and explanatory power of the racial resentment scale, we use

⁶ "Age, period and cohort measures cannot simultaneously be included in a standard regression model due to linear dependency," and it should be duly noted that analysis of "cohort effects are unreliable without including age in the model" (Schwadel and Stout 2012, 238).

⁷ For a more technical explanation of the APC-IE, please see (Yang, Fu, and Land 2004).

⁸ Table A1, in the appendix, shows the frequency of respondents by the year of ANES survey and their age group; the diagonals represent unique cohorts at different periods in time. For example, the bottom left element in the matrix shows 54 respondents in the 18-24 age group in 2016. This represents a birth cohort for those born between 1992 and 1998.

the intrinsic estimator procedure to model racial resentment. Following standard practices, ages, periods and cohorts are grouped into five-year categories.⁹ Consequently, we estimate coefficients for six periods, fourteen age groups, and nineteen cohorts. While the complete model estimates are presented in the Appendix, we illustrate the effects for all three sets of variables below in Figure 1.

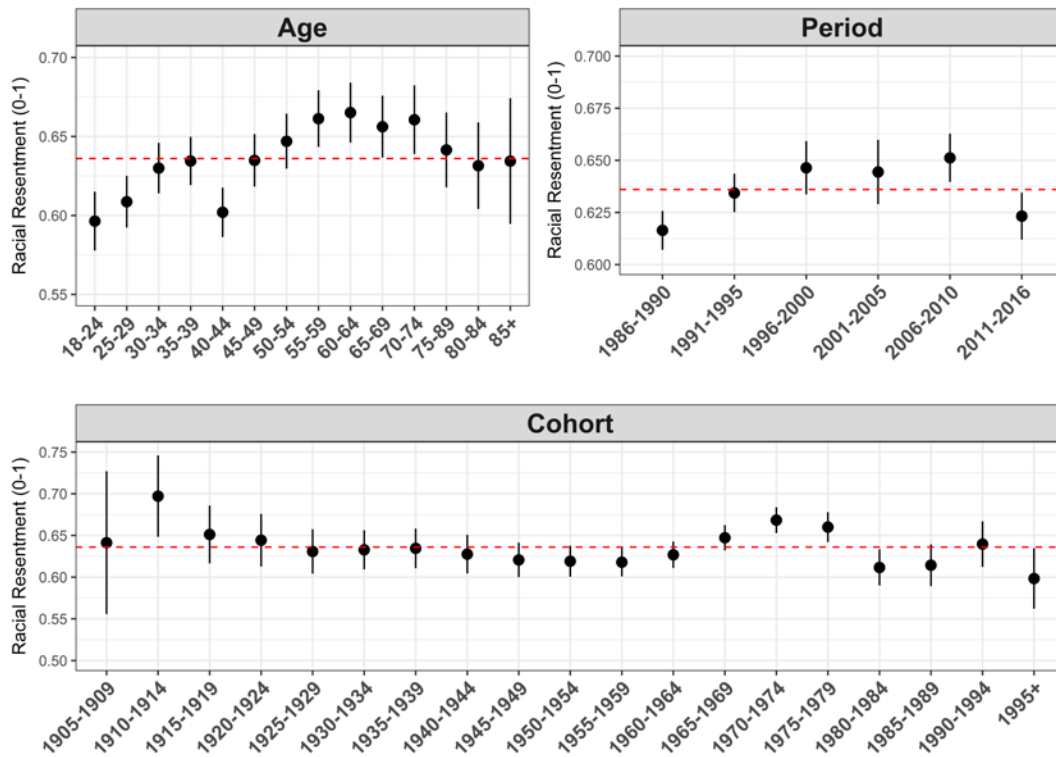


Figure 1: APC Model Estimates

As the upper left panel in Figure 1 shows, age is strongly related to feelings of racial resentment, as many might expect. Independent of the period the survey was conducted as well as the birth cohort of a respondent, Whites tend to become marginally more racially

⁹ This is the traditional method for demographers and for the APC-IE method used here. As there are only a few respondents aged 17-19 in the sample, we combine them with the age group ranging from 20-24. Disaggregating them does not change our results.

resentful as they enter their late forties and early fifties, a trend that continues for most of their lives. Younger Whites, those aged 30 years or less, tend to express less racial resentment than those older than them. We have some support for our age hypothesis, though the differences (which are statistically different from zero) are not as large as some scholars may expect. The largest difference between any two age groups is about 0.04 on the one-point scale, only 4% of the total possible change.

The upper right panel presents our estimated period effects. These data serve as evidence that racial resentment has been *significantly increasing* among Whites, a finding that runs counter to the popular narrative that the election of President Obama has ushered in a new “post-racial” America, racial resentment among Whites has actually significantly increased over the last twenty years. Certainly the racialization of the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections plays some part in this, but here we can precisely estimate just how great an effect these periods had compared to life-cycle and cohort effects.

Next we turn to our hypothesis concerning cohort effects, which are illustrated in the bottom panel of Figure 1. First, we notice that older birth cohorts (those born in the early 20th century) exhibit higher levels of racial resentment than do those born in the 1960s and 1970s. However, beginning with those born in 1980, the level of racial resentment seems to monotonically decrease, and all but one of those coefficients is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Substantively, this means Whites born between 1980 and 1998 tend to report lower levels of racial resentment compared to those born prior to 1980, and some Millennials (those born in the early 90s) appear to be less racially resentful than their predecessors, though not by much. We have some, albeit weak, evidence for the continuous socialization model, which led us to expect a clear, monotonic

decline in racial resentment over time due in large part to cohort replacement. We now move on to test our hypothesis that racial resentment, among Millennials, is more strongly related to both old-fashioned racial stereotypes as well as opinions on aid to African-Americans.

When Less is More

In order to test this, we look at data from several large cross-sectional surveys: the 2008 Cooperative Campaign Analysis Project (CCAP), 2012 CCAP, and the 2016 ANES. The key benefit of having several data sources is robustness. Testing our theory this way ensures that the findings are not due to chance variation in one particular cherry-picked sample; these surveys are large and nationally representative.¹⁰ The 2008 CCAP had over 16,000 White respondents; the 2012 CCAP had over 31,000, and the 2016 ANES had 3,038 non-Hispanic White respondents, 796 of whom were interviewed face-to-face.

We take a relatively simple approach to test our hypothesis that racial resentment is more closely related to old-fashioned racism, and related racial attitudes, for younger Whites than for older Whites. For our main independent variable we use the four question racial resentment battery and, as we did before, scale it to run from 0 (least racially resentful) to 1 (most racially resentful). Our dependent variables are those that are most relevant to our hypothesis in each of the data. In the 2008 CCAP, we use the differences between how a respondent placed both Whites and Blacks on two “old-fashioned”

¹⁰ We are indebted to one anonymous reviewer who pushed us to find more data to test these hypotheses; we believe that the resulting paper is much stronger as a result. The 2008 CCAP was produced by Jackman and Vavreck (2009). CCAP data are collected by YouGov and are matched to U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) as well as the Current Population Survey, and are weighted so as to produce a representative sample of registered voters over the age of 18. Details for the ANES sampling method can be found online (http://electionstudies.org/studypages/anes_timeseries_2016/CPS_MethodsDisclosure_ANES2016.pdf).

stereotype scales: hardworking/lazy and intelligent/unintelligent. Each item asked the respondent to place the group on this scale from 1-7, which we rescaled to run from 0-6 where higher values represent a more positive rating (either more hardworking or more intelligent). We then subtract the rating of Blacks from the placement of Whites to get a difference score. Similar measures appeared in the 2016 ANES, where we have the hardworking/lazy measure as well as stereotypes of each group as either violent or peaceful.

In the 2012 CCAP, we use the difference in feeling thermometer ratings of two groups – Whites and Blacks – in order to generate a score of “pro-White affect” which ranges from -100 (rating Blacks at 100 and Whites at 0) to 100 (the reverse). Finally, we examine one item that has been on the ANES for several decades and two items that were new in 2016. The first asks respondents to place themselves on a 7-point scale regarding how much the government should assist blacks, which we recode to run from 0 (Blacks should help themselves) to 6 (government should help Blacks). The second variable is made by taking the difference between how much discrimination the respondent believes Whites face in the U.S. compared to Blacks. Each of the composite variables asks the respondent to indicate, on a 5-point scale, how much discrimination each group faces from 0 (“none at all”) to 4 (“a great deal”). By subtracting how much discrimination the respondent believes Blacks face from how much discrimination they believe Whites face, we get an estimate of how many Whites believe they face more discrimination than Blacks. While the percentage of people who believe Whites are discriminated the same amount or more than Blacks is 35%, and most of those believe the groups are discriminated against equally, this is a test of our theory that younger Whites may be adopting a color-blind racial

ideology which allows them to see “reverse racism.” Finally, we look at how racial resentment shapes affective ratings of *Black Lives Matter*, an organization that campaigns against systemic racism against African-Americans. This variable is a simple “feeling thermometer” score and ranges from 0-100; higher scores indicate greater positive affect. If White Millennials were more racially progressive than previous generations, we would expect them to have higher affective ratings of the group.

Our modeling strategy again is straight forward, we estimate a linear regression predicting each of the dependent variables discussed above as a function of racial resentment, whether a respondent is a Millennial, and the interaction between those two variables. For purposes of interpretation, the coefficient for racial resentment represents the magnitude of racial stereotyping between the least and most racially resentful respondents. The coefficient for the interactive term represents the difference in the effect of racial resentment between Millennials and older Whites. Our hypothesis is that the effect of racial resentment would be stronger among younger Whites, thus we would expect that the interaction term is signed in the same direction as racial resentment. We present the results of these OLS estimates below in Table 2:

Table 2: How Racial Resentment works among White Millennials

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	Blacks as Less Intelligent	Blacks as Lazy	Pro-White Affect	Blacks as Lazy	Blacks as Violent	Aid to Blacks	Levels of Discrimination	Black Lives Matter (FT)
RR	1.43** (0.05)	1.92** (0.13)	40.98* (0.67)	2.20** (0.12)	2.71*** (0.13)	-3.99** (0.12)	2.53** (0.11)	-64.90** (2.12)
Millennial	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.19 (0.11)	-1.74 (0.88)	-0.25** (0.12)	-0.39** (0.13)	0.56** (0.13)	-0.27** (0.11)	1.03 (2.25)
RR x Mill.	0.35** (0.13)	0.28* (0.15)	3.22** (1.32)	0.51** (0.21)	0.69** (0.21)	-0.64** (0.20)	0.49** (0.18)	-7.69** (3.59)
Intercept	-0.33** (0.04)	-0.49** (0.04)	-12.74** (0.48)	-0.41** (0.08)	-0.57** (0.08)	4.51** (0.08)	-2.69** (0.07)	80.86** (1.40)
<i>N</i>	11,245	11,332	25,382	2,574	2,568	2,351	2,518	2,574
adj. <i>R</i> ²	0.089	0.117	0.175	0.186	0.251	0.459	0.289	0.186
Data Source	2008 CCAP	2008 CCAP	2012 CCAP	2016 ANES	2016 ANES	2016 ANES	2016 ANES	2016 ANES

* Indicates coefficients that are statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ (directional / one-tailed test)

**Indicates coefficients that are statistically different from zero at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test)

Non-Hispanic White respondents only; RR is the additive racial resentment battery rescaled to run from 0-1. The ANES data include both online and face-to-face surveys and are weighted accordingly. Models estimated separately for Millennials and non-Millennials appear in the Appendix and the adjusted R^2 statistic for these models also indicates a significantly stronger correlation between racial resentment across these groups.

As we can see from the regression estimates presented above, the effect of racial resentment on every variable is signed in the expected direction. Beginning with Models 1 and 2, we see that those who are more racially resentful hold more negative stereotypes of Blacks when compared to Whites. What is more interesting, however, is that the coefficients for racial resentment is larger in magnitude for Millennials, a finding significant in both the statistical and substantive sense. In Model 1, we would estimate that the effect of racial resentment for the typical older White would be that they rate Whites as 1.43 points more intelligent than they rated blacks. Adding this estimate to the interaction term in this model indicates that the same effect for Millennials is 1.78, an increase of over 20%. The pattern repeats itself in Model 2, where the most racially resentful Millennials see Blacks as about a quarter of a point more lazy than older respondents.

Moving to the model of pro-white affect in the 2012 CCAP, the third column of estimates in Table 2 indicates that, among older Whites, the estimated difference between the most racially liberal and racially conservative person is about 41 points on a 201-point scale; the interaction term indicates the total effect for Millennial Whites is just over 3 points higher. Models 4 and 5 show the same findings as Models 1 and 2: racial resentment has a larger effect for Millennials in terms of perceiving blacks as lazier, as well as more violent. Again these results are large and significant: in 2016 we would expect an older racial conservative to rate Blacks as 2.71 points more violent than the racial liberal would. Even though racially liberal Millennials hold lower levels of these stereotypes, based on the negative coefficient on the dummy variable, in some cases the most racially conservative Millennials are thought to hold stronger old-fashioned stereotypes than older Whites.

Turning to our final set of estimates, Models 6-8 all support our hypotheses. Not only does racial resentment have a strong negative correlation with thinking “blacks should help themselves” without any government assistance, the effect is again larger for Millennials. Despite the most racially liberal Millennials having a higher level of support for aid to Blacks, the most racially conservative Millennials are statistically indistinguishable from older respondents. The same is true for perceptions of discrimination: higher levels of racial resentment are associated with a respondent perceiving little difference in the levels of systemic discrimination faced by Blacks in the United States. Again, while the most racially liberal Millennials acknowledge that Blacks face higher levels of discrimination, this generational difference is washed out among those who are the most racially resentful. Finally, with regards to *Black Lives Matter*, Millennials are no warmer towards the group than older whites. The estimated feeling thermometer score for the least racially resentful older whites is about 81 degrees, while the most racially resentful older whites would be estimated to rate Black Lives Matter at just under 16 degrees. The same effect for Millennials, however, takes them from 82 degrees to about 9 degrees.

Discussion

The debate around racial resentment—as a measure and theory of racial attitudes—has largely been about the extent to which the scale measures a new form of racial animus, or if it is simply a measurement of attitudes towards racial policies (Carmines, Sniderman, and Easter 2011). But this article departs from that debate by asking a new set of questions that force us to consider the cross-generational validity of the measure. While there is a great deal of evidence that suggests that the racial resentment battery is a coherent belief system that is different from old fashioned racism and predicts White Americans’ attitudes

across a range of policy domains, our results suggest that the nature of this measure may be shifting. We believe this shift is caused by intergenerational heterogeneity, from a new cohort of Americans who have been socialized in a very different era than those whose attitudes this measure was originally meant to capture. These younger Americans are socialized to avoid talking about race, are more likely to feel that Whites are discriminated against, and are less likely to recognize racial inequality in the United States. Our findings illustrate the implications of such socialization by revealing that young Whites' racial attitudes are more strongly linked to old-fashioned prejudice than older Whites'.

Through our age-period-cohort analysis we showed that aggregate racial resentment increases over both ages and periods, but decreases in newer cohorts. Some may take this as evidence that racial resentment itself is disappearing over time. This interpretation would be a mistake. What we showed in our second set of analyses, using data from the 2016 ANES, is that racial resentment among younger whites may be increasingly related to old-fashioned racial stereotypes. As we argue above, we believe this can be attributed to two separate phenomena, one historical and one psychosocial. In terms of shared life experiences, we contend that younger people likely have a different set of ideas and references that come to mind when they are asked the questions in the racial resentment scale. Secondly, they have a different set of social norms about what is acceptable to talk about as far as issues of race are concerned. As a result, it might take a higher level of latent prejudice for a Millennial to give a "prejudiced" response to a survey question.

These findings raise a series of questions that are outside the scope of one article to address. First, major demographic, economic, political, and social changes led scholars like David Sears and Don Kinder to develop new measures of racial attitudes; we contend because we have seen another set of significant changes that it is time to embark on yet another conceptual enterprise to develop more sensitive and savvy measures of racial attitudes. Relatedly, we may need to consider that the structure of attitudes may be undergoing a change. At the time the racial resentment scale was developed, the questions presented were read and understood as a more subtle way of tapping racial animus than the traditional biological racism or social distance questions, but we are in a new era of racial politics, where the language of racial attitudes has a different structure from the one developed during the immediate post-Civil Rights era.

As such, researchers must develop measures that capture a newer configuration of racial attitudes. Psychologists and sociologists have already begun building foundation to measure “colorblind” racial attitudes (cf. Neville et al. 2000) as well as racial attitudes that may arise as Whites become more cognizant of their racial identity due to do the vast demographic changes that have occurred over the past three decades and are projected to occur henceforth (Spanierman and Heppner 2004, Spanierman et al. 2006). We have already begun this endeavor, and this paper is just one in a series. As the title of our article indicates, when it comes to younger Whites’ racial prejudice, “*less is more.*” Overall, our key findings should serve both to reopen the discussion of how to accurately measure racial prejudice in a post-Obama America and signal that researchers should be attuned to these generational differences in racial attitudes.

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