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On the Meaning, Measurement, and Implications of Racial Resentment

By
EDWARD G. CARMINES,
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and
BETH C. EASTER

A new racism, it is claimed, has become a dominant feature of contemporary American politics. According to the theory's originators, the new racism has largely replaced the old racism, which was based on the alleged biological inferiority of blacks. The new racism, referred to as "symbolic racism" or, more recently, "racial resentment," by contrast, is defined as a conjunction of anti-black feelings and American moral traditionalism. According to its proponents, this new racism now structures and dominates the racial thinking of whites generally. Howard Schuman has suggested, however, that the index used to measure racial resentment may be fundamentally flawed because it may be conflated with the measurement of attitudes toward racial policies. The authors' analysis supports Schuman's suggestion. They conclude that racial resentment is not a valid measure of racism, which raises questions about the extent to which a new racism now dominates the thinking of white Americans.

Keywords: new racism; racial resentment; racial stereotypes; racial prejudice; racial policy preferences

A prominent body of recent research contends that racism is the driving force behind whites' opposition to policies designed to assist blacks. This racism, to be sure, is not the blatant bigotry of the Jim Crow era, resting on assumptions about the biological inferiority of blacks. Rather, a new racism has taken hold, one that is more subtle than its predecessor but equally invidious, deriving its strength from a combination of anti-black sentiment and traditional American values, one of which, above all, is individualism (Kinder and Sears 1981).

According to this research, the new racism is not just one factor among many that influence people's racial policy preferences. Rather, this new racism is "the primary ingredient in white opinion on racial affairs," dominating and defining the views of white Americans, not on occasion or regarding an exceptionally controversial issue such as affirmative action, but across the whole spectrum of racial policies, including such

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mainstream issues as fair treatment in housing and employment (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 301). Emphasizing the predictive power of their measure of this new racism, these researchers conclude that racism has become “by a fair margin . . . the most important” force shaping the political thinking of white Americans about issues of race (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 124). Indeed, “to predict white opinion on issues of race, nothing works as well” (Kinder and Mendelberg 2000, 62).

This claim, if true, has important implications for both the understanding of American politics and the making of American public policy. It implies, at a minimum, that the nation’s unfinished journey toward true racial equality has been derailed—perhaps permanently—by the power of a new force in American politics.

Though it may have declined in recent decades, no one disputes that racial prejudice continues to be a pervasive problem in American society. In this article,

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however, we show that racial resentment is not a valid measure of racial prejudice and, therefore, does not provide relevant, much less convincing, evidence about the extent to which racial animosity continues to dominate the thinking of white Americans.

This article first outlines the theoretical rationale underlying this line of research and then carries out a two-pronged assessment of the validity of the current measure of the new racism—or “racial resentment,” as it now has been labeled. The first line of analysis assesses the most direct evidence offered in support of the claim that the measure of the new racism is, in fact, a measure of racism: notably, that it is interchangeable with a self-evidently valid measure of racism. The second line of analysis evaluates a conjecture of Schuman’s (2000): namely, that this measure of the new racism is primarily a measure of the very thing that it is supposed to explain—racial policy attitudes.

The Concept of the New Racism

In our outlining of the theoretical rationale underlying the concept of the new racism, we pay particular attention to the only book-length treatment of the topic—Donald Kinder and Lynn Sanders’s *Divided by Color* (1996). Their work is notable because it provides the most detailed explication of the concept and because it presents the most extensive evidence in support of the validity of the contemporary measure of the new racism.

As its name implies, the new racism shares many characteristics with the old. It is, as it were, racism in a new bottle. The older version was based on the presumption that African Americans were biologically inferior to whites—literally a race apart. This biological racism was racism in its rawest and most primitive form and gave rise to an ideology that at various times justified slavery, economic exploitation, political disenfranchisement, and legally enforced segregation.

The new racism differs from the old because of its disavowal of biological determinism. Most whites no longer regard African Americans as inherently inferior to them and, therefore, as intrinsically incapable of balancing the rights and responsibilities of full citizenship. But for the new racism researchers, the decline of biological racism does not mean that racism itself has disappeared from America or that racist impulses do not continue to dominate the political thinking of most white Americans. Quite the contrary: “The decline of biological racism must not be equated with the decline of racism generally for as biological racism has declined, a new form of racial prejudice has appeared” (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 97–98).

The new racism also differs from the old because the former represents an alliance between racial animosity on one hand and traditional American values, especially individualism, on the other. As Kinder and Sanders (1996, 293) put it, “Racial resentment is thought to be the conjunction of whites’ feelings toward blacks and their support for American values, especially secularized versions of the Protestant ethic.” It is this union of racial antagonism with American moral

traditionalism that is the defining feature of the new racism and the main reason for its alleged potency in contemporary American politics.

On this account, the new racism is thus more refined and less offensive than the old. It claims not that blacks are genetically inferior to whites but that they lack the moral values of individualism, hard work, discipline, and self-sacrifice that whites believe are central to their race and American society as a whole. Blacks are faulted because they do not “try hard enough to overcome the difficulties they face and they take what they have not earned” (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 106). Since racial anger and indignation have now become disconnected from biological racism and joined with cherished American values, this new form of racism has not only become widespread in contemporary America but is expressed openly and without hesitation by many whites. Thus, the scar of racism continues to deform white America; the only difference is that “today prejudice is expressed in the language of American individualism” (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 106).

The Convergent Validity of Racial Resentment: The Test of Interchangeability

In *Divided by Color*, Kinder and Sanders employ a multiple-item scale to measure the new racism, which they refer to as “racial resentment.”¹ They provide evidence pertaining to the scale’s reliability, validity, and importance, concluding that “racial resentment is coherent and stable. . . . It powerfully predicts derogatory racial stereotypes . . . and it is associated with, but distinct from, biological forms of racism, which it has largely replaced” (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 109).

Kinder and Sanders (1996) maintain that their scale of racial resentment possesses two extremely important properties. First, they claim that the impact of racial resentment on white Americans’ racial policy attitudes is unequaled. No other factor—including material threats to self-interest, support for limited government, ideology, the race of the interviewer, or a wide array of social background factors (age, region, gender, Hispanic ethnicity, family income, education, and occupational status)—has a comparable influence on the positions that white Americans take on a wide range of racial policies, including school desegregation, the fair treatment of blacks in employment, the role of the federal government in providing assistance to blacks, and affirmative action programs in employment and higher education. Second, Kinder and Sanders claim that their measure of racial resentment is characterized by a truly impressive degree of validity, presenting new evidence that it indeed measures what it is intended to measure.

The issue of validity has been a central concern since the introduction of measures of the new racism, with a succession of critical studies claiming that these measures are not really measures of racism (e.g., Hurwitz and Peffley 1998; Sniderman and Piazza 1993; Sniderman et al. 1991; Sniderman and Tetlock 1986a, 1986b; Sniderman, Crosby, and Howell 2000; Bobo 1988; Schuman et al. 1997; Stoker 1998; Tetlock 1994; Wood 1994). Huddy and Feldman (2009, 426)

summarize the widely expressed criticism directed toward measures of the new racism as follows: "From a measurement perspective, new-racism questions remain ambiguous indicators of racial prejudice because they ask white Americans to agree with complex statements that could garner support for reasons other than racial prejudice."

Kinder and Sanders (1996) respond directly to this challenge in a variety of ways.² They argue, for example, that the questions they use to measure racial resentment are face valid—that is, that inspection of their manifest content shows them to be measures of the new racism. But arguments on the basis of face validity tend to be weak as a general matter. Their more original and impressive evidence focuses on the convergent validity of their measure of the new racism.

Convergent validity refers to the extent to which alternative measures of a given theoretical concept have similar relationships with other theoretically relevant variables (Carmines and Zeller 1979; Zeller and Carmines 1980). Kinder and Sanders (1996, 299) accordingly ask, "To what extent do our results depend on the particular ways we have measured racial resentment?" To answer this question, they introduce into their analysis an index of racial stereotypes, originally developed for the General Social Survey and later adopted by the American National Election Studies (ANES); the latter has long been considered a valid measure of racial prejudice (Levine, Carmines, and Sniderman 1999). (The racial stereotype items are listed in this article's appendix.) Kinder and Sanders substitute this alternative measure of racial prejudice for their measure of racial resentment and then reestimate the impacts each has on racial policy preferences. They find that the two measures of racism produce virtually identical results. Their conclusion is unequivocal:

Our estimate of the role played by racial animosity in white opinion on racial policy is essentially unaffected by which measure we use—and in each case commands center stage. Whether by expressions of racial resentment or by endorsement of racial stereotypes, racial hostility is the primary ingredient in white opinion on racial affairs. (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 301)

The interchangeability of racial resentment and racial stereotyping as predictors of whites' racial policy positions would appear to provide compelling evidence of the convergent validity of Kinder and Sanders's measure of racial resentment. Since agreement with negative racial stereotypes is widely considered a valid measure of racial prejudice, if their measure truly can be substituted for a measure of racial stereotyping, then their measure, too, must be a valid measure of racism.

The proof of interchangeability is the equivalence of the regression coefficients of racial resentment and racial stereotypes in predicting whites' racial policy preferences. For example, taking attitudes toward fair employment as the dependent variable, the value of the unstandardized coefficient (scored from 0 to 1) of racial resentment, from the 1992 ANES survey, is .63; the value of the similarly calculated derogatory stereotype measure is .61. Kinder and Sanders (1996, 300) find a similar degree of equivalence with respect to all of the racial policies they analyze.

These results, however, may be an artifact of their scaling of the derogatory stereotype items. Even though they score the derogatory stereotype items between 0 and 1, Kinder and Sanders (1996) place white respondents who believe that blacks are every bit as meritorious as whites at the neutral midpoint of .5 rather than the logical endpoint of 0. Locating whites who believe that blacks are as good as whites at the midpoint is wrong. Such placement requires that, to be classified as racially tolerant, whites believe that blacks are superior to whites. More consequentially, since only a minuscule number of whites believe that blacks are superior to whites, this coding means that the distribution of scores for the derogatory stereotype measure, rather than running from the nominal minimum of 0 to the maximum of 1, is largely constrained between the midpoint, .5, and 1. Specifically, almost 97 percent of the white respondents are arbitrarily forced between the midpoint of the stereotype measure and its upper bound. This crowding, as we show, inflates substantially the regression coefficient.

The regression coefficient generated from least squares can be expressed as follows:

$$\hat{B} \equiv \frac{S_{xy}}{S_{xx}} = \frac{\sum (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sum (x_i - \bar{x})^2},$$

where y is the dependent variable (support for a given racial policy) and x is the independent variable (level of prejudice measured by the endorsement of racial stereotypes). There are two main consequences of artificially constraining the range of scores on x from .5 to 1. First, \bar{x} increases dramatically. In the 1992 ANES survey, \bar{x} jumps from .19, when scores on prejudice are allowed to vary across the entire interval from 0 to 1, to .59, when virtually all of the scores are restricted to only the .5 to 1 range. Second, the distribution of x around its mean (\bar{x}) arbitrarily decreases. The variance decreases because only 3.4 percent of the white respondents score between 0 and .5. Accordingly, the standard deviation of x decreases from .20, when x can assume the full range of possible values, to .10, when it is artificially constrained to only one half of that range. The effect of increasing the mean and decreasing the standard deviation when scores are artificially constrained is straightforward: the ratio of S_{xy} to S_{xx} increases, substantially inflating the estimate of the regression coefficient.

The results presented in section A of Table 1 report a replication of the Kinder and Sanders (1996) analysis for the 1992 ANES, correcting for the truncation of scores in the racial stereotype measure. The first two columns compare the explanatory power of racial resentment and the derogatory racial stereotype measure, each entered separately as a predictor of whites' racial policy preferences. Instead of the effects of the two measures being (approximately) equal in size, the impact of racial resentment on racial policy preferences is markedly larger—for the three racial policies, more than twice the size of the racial stereotype measure. For example, on the issue of the government making an effort to improve the economic and social position of blacks, the coefficient for racial resentment is .48;

TABLE 1
The Impact of Racial Resentment and Derogatory Racial Stereotypes
on Whites' Racial Policy Preferences, Calculated Independently and Jointly

	Independently Estimated		Jointly Estimated	
	Racial Resentment	Derogatory Stereotypes	Racial Resentment	Derogatory Stereotypes
Section A: 1992 ANES				
Government effort	.48°	.21°	.46°	.09°
Preferential hiring	.33°	.03	.35°	-.05
Government spending	.41°	.17°	.39°	.07°
Section B: 2000 ANES				
Preferential hiring	.31°	.06	.32°	-.02
Government spending	.37°	.15°	.36°	.06
Section C: 2004 ANES				
Government effort	.51°	.20°	.49°	.09°
Preferential hiring	.46°	.10°	.46°	-.01

NOTE: Standardized regression coefficients reported.
°Significant at .01.

for the measure of derogatory stereotypes, .21. Similarly, the coefficient for government spending is .41 for racial resentment and .17 for the stereotype measure.

The third and fourth columns of section A in Table 1 report the impact of both racial resentment and derogatory stereotypes when the contributions of the two are calculated simultaneously. The contrast could not be more striking. For every issue, the impact of racial resentment is large, that for racial stereotypes trivial (when distinguishable from 0, barely so). Thus, for the issue of government effort, the coefficient for racial resentment is .46; for the racial stereotypes, .09; for the issue of preferential hiring, .35; and for racial stereotypes, -.05.

Sections B and C in Table 1 provide comparable results for the 2000 and 2004 ANES, the two other surveys that contain measures of racial resentment, racial stereotypes, and racial policies. These results parallel those from 1992. In each case, the coefficients for racial resentment are strikingly higher than those for racial stereotypes. For example, in 2000, the simple correlation between preferences for government spending on programs to assist blacks and racial resentment is .37, but for derogatory stereotypes the coefficient is .15.

In sum, Kinder and Sanders's (1996) measure of racial resentment is not substitutable for a measure of racial stereotypes when it comes to predicting whites' racial policy preferences. It appeared so only because of Kinder and Sanders's arbitrary scoring of the measure of racial stereotypes, which has the effect of artificially inflating the magnitude of the regression coefficient. Since the two measures are not interchangeable, it follows that they cannot be measures of the same thing. Since derogatory racial stereotypes are widely seen as a valid measure of racial prejudice, it follows that, whatever the Kinder and Sanders measure of racial resentment is measuring, it cannot be a measure of racial prejudice.

The Risk of Tautology: Racial Resentment and Racial Policy Preferences

The strongest piece of evidence in support of the new racism is its predictive power. No one disputes the fact that there is a very strong relationship between racial resentment and racial policy preferences. But while highlighting the apparent strength of the new racism, researchers have done little to investigate its actual meaning.

Howard Schuman (2000, 304–7) questions the meaning of the relationship between racial resentment and racial policy preferences. For Kinder and his collaborators, this relationship of course demonstrates the powerful role that the new racism plays in shaping whites' attitudes toward contemporary racial issues. That is, they see the relationship as being one of cause and effect. But as Schuman points out, this is not the only reason that racial resentment and opposition to racial policies may be strongly related. He notes that the wording of some of the items in the racial resentment scale and the wording of the racial policy questions overlap to a substantial extent. Given this similarity, he speculates that the "strong association between them might be thought of as indicating somewhat different aspects of the same general construct, negative attitudes toward the need to help blacks, rather than as distinguishing cause from effect" (Schuman 2000, 307).

In other words, according to Schuman, racial resentment—at least as measured by Kinder and Sanders's (1996) scale—might not be a valid measure of racial prejudice—new or old—at all, but rather an alternative way of asking respondents whether blacks need, require, or are entitled to help and assistance. If so, racial resentment and racial policy would simply be, as Schuman (2000, 305) puts it, "different aspects of the same general construct." And the astonishing power of the racial resentment measure to predict whites' racial policy positions, rather than being proof of the continuing power of racial hostility to dominate the political thinking of white Americans, instead would constitute evidence that it is essentially another way of measuring what it purports to explain. As Schuman (2000, 304) elaborates,

Attitudes are mental entities or constructs based on verbalizations, and they all swim around in the same heads with no temporal or other labels to conveniently indicate causal order. Any correlation between the two attitudes, therefore, starts with the burden of proof on the investigator to show that the two are not just somewhat different ways of asking about the same construct, or at least about constructs that overlap greatly in meaning.

The basis for Schuman's (2000) concern is evident on examination of the wording of the items that make up the racial resentment index. For example, consider the following racial resentment item: "It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks only try harder they could be just as well off as whites." Is this item really very different from the following question concerning racial policy?

Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help blacks because they should help themselves.

Both of these items seem to capture a similar underlying concept—namely, whether blacks make sufficient effort to help themselves. The main difference between the statements is that the latter explicitly mentions government while the former does not.

As another example, take this item from the racial resentment scale: “Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.” Compare this item to the following question about race policy: “Should federal spending on programs that assist blacks be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?” Again, these two items seem to tap into essentially the same basic attitude—whether more should be done to assist blacks—the primary difference between them being that the latter invokes government as the sponsor of the assistance. The substantial overlap in the content of the two sets of items does not prove, of course, that the two scales basically measure the same underlying concept, but it does suggest that this is a distinct possibility.

Does Kinder and Sanders’s (1996) measure of racial resentment and racial policy preferences reflect the same or highly overlapping phenomenon, as Schuman (2000) suggests? Or is racial resentment the primary determinant of whites’ racial positions, as Kinder and Sanders and others contend? Factor analysis can help to answer this question by indicating whether it requires one or two principal factors to account for the pattern of observed correlations between the racial resentment and racial policy items. If both sets of items measure the same underlying phenomenon, then an exploratory factor analysis should reveal a single dominant factor. Conversely, if these items represent two separate, though related, concepts, then there should be compelling evidence of a two-factor solution with the two factors corresponding to racial resentment and racial policy.

Fortunately, the ANES has included a version of Kinder and Sanders’s (1996) measure of racial resentment in seven surveys; each of these surveys includes a battery of racial policy questions as well. Thus, we are able to conduct seven separate tests of the dimensionality of these measures. Table 2 presents the eigenvalues of the first two extracted factors derived from the correlations between the racial resentment and racial policy items for each of the seven surveys. The higher the eigenvalue, the greater the capability of the given factor to account for the correlation among the items. The general rule, as Bollen (1989, 229) observes, is to “rank the eigenvalues and use a cutoff value of one or a sharp drop in the size of the eigenvalues to determine the number of factors.” Based on this criterion, the evidence is unequivocal: the correlations between these items are accurately represented by a single major factor. In all seven surveys, the first extracted factor has an eigenvalue well above 1.0, in the 2.0 to 3.0 range. But none of the second factors has an eigenvalue approaching 1.0. This evidence is consistent with Schuman’s (2000) conjecture that both the racial resentment and racial policy measures reflect a single underlying phenomenon, not two different concepts.

TABLE 2
Factor Analysis of Racial Resentment and Race Policy
Items: Eigenvalues of First Two Extracted Factors

	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	2000	2004
Eigenvalue factor 1	2.79	2.70	2.96	2.57	2.29	2.08	2.75
Eigenvalue factor 2	0.46	0.57	0.54	0.47	0.48	0.34	0.37

SOURCE: American National Election Studies Cumulative Data File.

It should be said that the strength of association between the measure of racial resentment and racial policy is, ironically, a reason for concern. Correcting for measurement error, the correlation between the two scales for the seven ANES studies varies between .72 and .94, with the average being .85. The magnitude of these coefficients suggests again that, for all practical purposes, these measures of racial resentment and racial policy represent the same, rather than a different, phenomenon.

Yet it can be argued that these results, instead of demonstrating that the racial resentment and the racial policy items measure the same underlying phenomenon, show the sheer power of racial resentment in determining white Americans' positions on issues of race. That the two sets of items load on the same factor indicates just how close the causal connection between the two is. A factor analysis of these two sets of items cannot differentiate between these two competing interpretations.

The question of causal proximity does suggest a further test. If racial resentment fundamentally reflects racial prejudice, then it should be more closely tied to measures of racial prejudice than to measures of racial policy. Conversely, just as the racial resentment measure is another way of measuring racial policy preferences, it should be more closely tied to indicators of racial policy positions than to indicators of racial prejudice.

We therefore have conducted an exploratory factor analysis of the indicators of all three constructs—racial resentment, racial stereotypes, and racial policy—for the three ANES surveys in which there are measures of all three concepts: 1992, 2000, and 2004. If Kinder and Sanders (1996) are correct in maintaining that racial resentment and racial stereotypes are basically alternative measures of the same underlying construct—racism—then both sets of indicators should define one factor, while racial policy positions should define a separate second factor. Conversely, if, as Schuman (2000) suggests, racial resentment and racial policy are really measuring the same underlying phenomenon, then measures of these constructs should define the one factor, while racial stereotypes—being the only measure of racial prejudice—should define a second factor. It is not the number of substantive factors, but rather their structure, that distinguishes these two alternative interpretations.

An exploratory factor analysis indicates that in all three surveys, the three sets of items reflect two main factors. Only the first two extracted factors have eigenvalues

TABLE 3
Factor Analysis of Racial Resentment, Racial Policy,
and Racial Stereotype Items: Factor Loadings

Item	1992		2000		2004	
	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 1	Factor 2
Government effort	.62	.14	— ^a	— ^a	.59	.15
Preferential hiring	.43	−.04	.41	.01	.55	.04
Government spending	.55	.11	.46	.10	— ^a	— ^a
Past discrimination	.56	.14	.62	.11	.63	.08
Special favors	.67	.08	.65	.07	.74	.09
Try harder	.61	.16	.63	.19	.67	.19
Blacks have gotten less	.65	.12	.61	.17	.70	.09
Blacks not intelligent	.06	.64	.04	.81	.01	.81
Blacks don't work hard	.17	.66	.18	.69	.19	.77
Blacks violent	.12	.53	— ^a	— ^a	— ^a	— ^a
Blacks not trustworthy	— ^a	— ^a	.09	.76	.09	.76

SOURCE: 1992, 2000, and 2004 American National Election Studies.

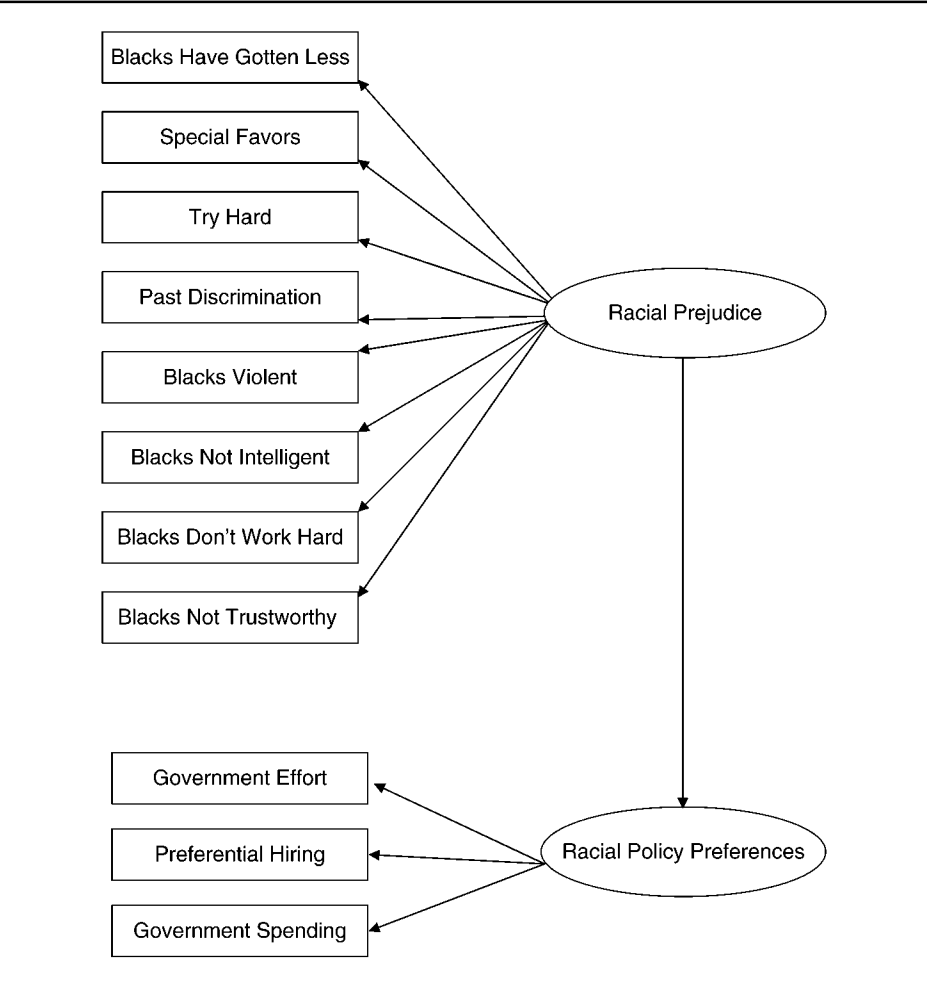
a. Question was not available for that particular year.

greater than 1.0, and there is a sharp drop in the size of the eigenvalues associated with the factors beginning with the third extracted factor. When the two factors are rotated according to the varimax criterion, a crystal-clear pattern emerges in each survey, as shown in Table 3. The racial stereotype items are distinct in loading almost entirely on the second factor, while both the racial resentment and racial policy items load strongly on the first factor but not at all on the second factor. The racial resentment and racial policy items, this evidence strongly suggests, represent the same underlying concept, while the three racial stereotypes constitute a separate concept.

Finally, we can assess the meaning of the racial resentment scale—whether it primarily measures a new form of racism or simply reflects preferences about racial policies—by formally comparing the structural equation models represented by the Kinder and Sanders (1996) and Schuman (2000) formulations. The causal model that Kinder and Sanders implied is depicted in Figure 1. In this model, racial prejudice is measured by the racial resentment and racial stereotype items, which, in turn, have a causal impact on whites' racial policy preferences. Conversely, in Figure 2, which is based on Schuman's alternative causal model, the racial resentment items actually represent attitudes toward racial policy, while racial stereotypes represent the only measure of racial prejudice.

A vast array of indexes now exist to assess the extent to which observed correlations fit alternative structural models, and sometimes they can lead to different conclusions about which structural model provides a better fit (Bentler and Bonett 1980; Bollen 1989). Fortunately, in this case, this complexity does not complicate our evaluation because all of the evidence supports the same conclusion. As can be seen in Table 4, all of the coefficients indicate that the Schuman

FIGURE 1
Kinder and Sanders's Structured Model: Racial Resentment
Items and Racial Stereotype Items as Components of Racial Prejudice

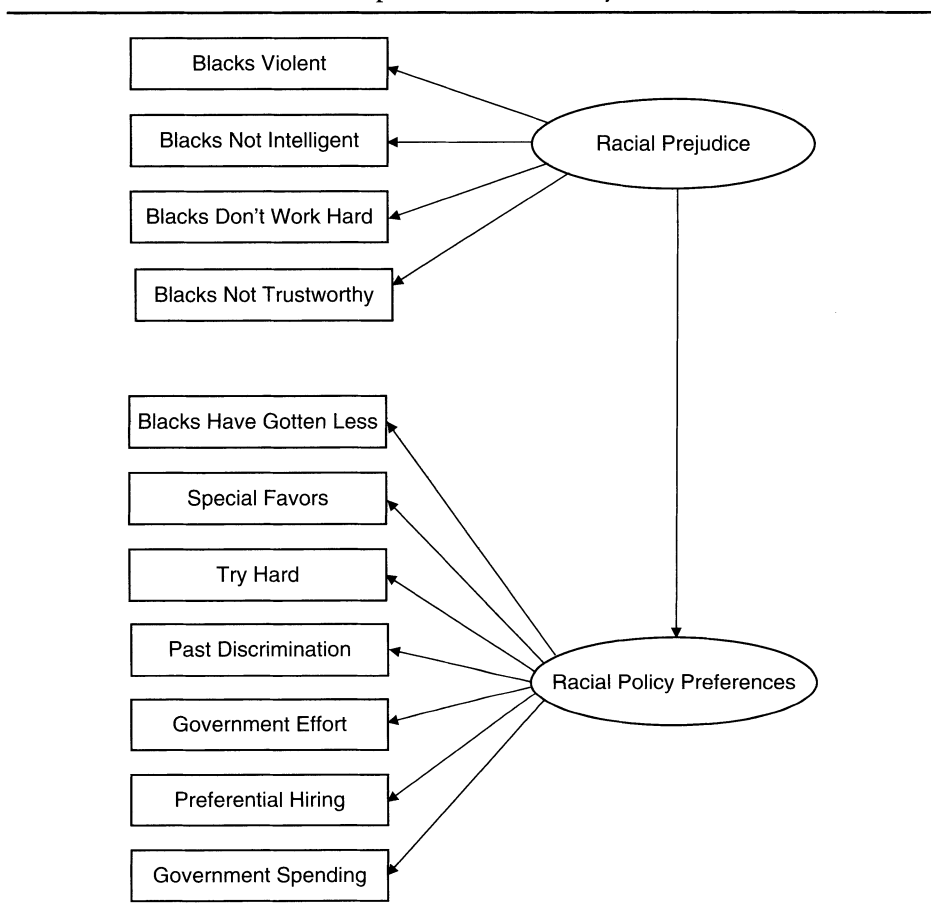


model provides a better fit to the data estimated in all three surveys than does the Kinder and Sanders model, and it provides an acceptable overall fit.

Summary and Conclusions

Does racial prejudice still dominate the political thinking of white Americans, not just with respect to controversial issues such as affirmative action but also with regard to mainstream racial issues such as whether the government should

FIGURE 2
Alternative Structural Model: Racial Resentment
Items Are a Component of Racial Policy Preferences



guarantee equal rights for blacks and whites and whether the government should make an effort to improve the social and economic position of African Americans? According to proponents of the new racism, the answer to this question is an unequivocal yes. While acknowledging that old-fashioned biologically based racism has declined among white Americans, they maintain that a new form of racism has taken its place. Moreover, this new racism may be more insidious than its predecessor because it combines racial animosity with traditional American moral values, especially individualism. Today, expressions of racism are openly uttered and socially accepted because they are entwined with the language of American values.

Empirical evidence supporting the new racism rests not only on its alleged powerful and unequal impact on shaping the political thinking of white Americans

TABLE 4
Fit Indices for the Two Structural Equation Models

	1992		2000		2004		Suggested Criteria Acceptable Fit
	Kinder/ Sanders Model	Alternative Model	Kinder/ Sanders Model	Alternative Model	Kinder/ Sanders Model	Alternative Model	
Goodness-of-fit index	0.90	0.94	0.77	0.96	0.78	0.95	> .90
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index	0.84	0.91	0.60	0.94	0.61	0.92	> .90
Normed fit index	0.86	0.92	0.70	0.95	0.73	0.95	> .90
Incremental fit index	0.87	0.93	0.71	0.95	0.73	0.95	> .90
Relative fit index	0.81	0.89	0.59	0.93	0.63	0.93	> .90
Parsimonious goodness-of-fit index	0.56	0.58	0.44	0.56	0.45	0.55	higher value
Parsimonious normed goodness-of-fit index	0.65	0.69	0.51	0.68	0.53	0.68	higher value
Root mean squared error of approximation	0.12	0.09	0.23	0.08	0.22	0.09	< .10

SOURCE: American National Election Studies.

but also on the truly impressive degree of construct validity apparently exhibited by the scale used to measure new racism, most recently, Kinder and Sanders's (1996) racial resentment scale. Their strategy for assessing the validity of their measure of racial resentment is straightforward and, on its face, convincing. Having shown that racial resentment is a powerful predictor of whites' racial policy preferences—no other predictor approaches its potency—they substitute a different measure of racial prejudice for their measure of racial resentment and reestimate its effects on these same racial policy preferences. The two sets of estimates are virtually the same, seemingly putting to rest any concern one might have about the validity of their measure of racial resentment. One's confidence is only heightened by the fact that racial stereotypes have long been considered a valid measure of racism. If these two measures of racial attitudes are interchangeable, then there is little doubt that the Kinder and Sanders measure of racial resentment is valid. *Ipso facto*, a new racism is currently dominating the racial and political views of white Americans.

The burden of this article has been to argue that this conclusion, concerning the stranglehold that racial prejudice has on white Americans, is doubtful to the extent that it is based on the presumed validity of the racial resentment scale. Our evidence strongly indicates that racial resentment is not a valid measure of racial prejudice.

Our results show, contrary to the claim of Kinder and Sanders (1996), that the measure of racial resentment or symbolic racism is not substitutable for a measure of racial stereotypes—a direct, clear-cut, and widely accepted measure of racial prejudice. But if racial resentment does not reflect primarily racial prejudice, what does it represent? Several studies indicate that it is confounded with measures of political ideology, a criticism that its defenders strongly deny (Feldman and Huddy 2005; Sniderman and Tetlock 1986a, 1986b; Sears and Henry 2005; Tarman and Sears 2005). Howard Schuman (2000) suggests instead that the racial resentment measure primarily reflects racial policy attitudes, hence the extraordinary strength of the relationship between the two. In his view they are, if not quite the same thing, so closely related that one cannot be treated as an explanation of the other.

Our results support Schuman's (2000) conjecture. A variety of statistical analyses show that, rather than being a measure of racism, racial resentment measures primarily racial policy attitudes. This casts the results of the new racism research in a quite different light. The strongest part of such research has been the sheer strength of the correlation between the measure of racial resentment and racial policy attitudes. In retrospect, the very strength of this relationship points to the weakness of the measure. Racial resentment's relationship with racial policy attitudes is so exceptionally strong precisely because the measure of "racial resentment" is primarily a measure of racial policy attitudes.

We believe this result is of substantial importance. According to the new racism researchers, racism in the United States declined after World War II. But it rebounded in response to race riots in cities and the rise of the Black Power Movement in the middle of the 1960s. Indeed, racism regained so much of its strength that it became in the 1960s and has remained "by a fair margin . . . the most important" force shaping the political thinking of white Americans about issues of race (Kinder and Sanders 1996, 124).

Consider what it would mean if this were true. Between the 1940s and 1960s, America went through a profound social and political transformation. Economic opportunities expanded at an unprecedented rate. Educational opportunities exploded. The new mass medium of television helped to nationalize the American experience. The civil rights movement caught the conscience of the country. Americans' commitment to the principle of racial equality and to tolerance—racial, political, and social—was transformed. The change in American beliefs about race during this time may be the largest recorded in the study of public opinion. But if all of these changes sufficed to cause only a *temporary* decline in white Americans' racism, then racism in one form or another will almost certainly be the driving force behind white Americans' responses to issues of race for the foreseeable future.

Such a pessimistic conclusion is unwarranted in our judgment. Racial prejudice is far from having vanished from contemporary American politics. But the only evidence that it dominates the thinking of white Americans is based on a single measure—a measure, we have shown, that should not be considered a valid measure of racial prejudice.

Appendix

Racial Resentment, Racial Policy, and Racial Stereotype Items

Racial Resentment

Blacks Have Gotten Less: Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.

Special Favors: Irish, Italians, Jews, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.

Try Hard: It's really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.

Past Discrimination: Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

Racial Policy

Guaranteed Equal Opportunity: Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statement. Equal opportunity for blacks and whites is very important but it's not really the government's job to guarantee it. Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with that statement?

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Fair Employment: Some people feel that if black people are not getting fair treatment in jobs, the government in Washington should see to it that they do. Others feel that this is not the government's business. Should the government in Washington see to it that black people get fair treatment in jobs or is this not the government's business?

Government Spending: If you had a say in making up the federal budget this year, on which of these programs would you like to see spending increased and which decreased? Should federal spending on programs that assist blacks be increased, decreased, or kept about the same?

Government Effort: Some people feel that the government in Washington should make every effort to improve the social and economic position of blacks. Suppose these people are at one end of the scale at point number 1. Others feel that the government should not make any special effort to help blacks because they should help themselves. Suppose these people are at the other end, at point 7. And of course, some other people have opinions somewhere in between at points 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about it?

Preferential Hiring: Some people say that because of past discrimination against blacks, preference in hiring and promotion should be given to blacks. Others say preferential hiring and promotion of blacks is wrong because it gives blacks advantages they have not earned. What about your opinion—are you for or against preferential hiring and promotions of blacks?

Racial Stereotypes

Blacks' (whites') intelligent: Where would you rate blacks (whites) on a scale of 1 to 7? (Where 1 indicates unintelligent, 7 means intelligent, and 4 indicates most blacks [whites] are not closer to one end or the other.)

Blacks' (whites') violent: Where would you rate blacks (whites) on a scale of 1 to 7? (Where 1 indicates violent, 7 means peaceful, and 4 indicates most blacks [whites] are not closer to one end or the other.)

Blacks' (whites') hardworking: Where would you rate blacks (whites) on a scale of 1 to 7? (Where 1 indicates lazy, 7 means hardworking, and 4 indicates most blacks [whites] are not closer to one end or the other.)

Blacks' (whites') trustworthy: Where would you rate blacks (whites) on a scale of 1 to 7? (Where 1 indicates untrustworthy, 7 means trustworthy, and 4 indicates most blacks [whites] are not closer to one end or the other.)

SOURCE: American National Election Study, Cumulative Data File.

Notes

1. In his more recent work, Kinder refers to racial resentment as simply racial prejudice (Kinder and Kam 2009, 209–10); there is no longer any claim that it is “subtle” (by implication, just the opposite), nor that it also measures values. But if this were true, it is even more important that the racial resentment items load on the standard prejudice measure rather than policy.

2. For other defenses of the measurement of racial resentment, see Henry and Sears (2002), Sears and Henry (2005), and Tarman and Sears (2005).

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