

THE CONTOURS AND ETIOLOGY OF WHITES' ATTITUDES TOWARD BLACK-WHITE INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE¹

EWA A. GOLEBIEWSKA

Wayne State University

Significant, positive changes have taken place in Whites' racial attitudes since the 1960s, yet resistance to change in the racial status quo continues. One area in which progress has been markedly slower involves attitudes toward interracial marriage. This is an important aspect of racial attitudes to consider because intermarriage can be viewed as a barometer of the extent to which racial boundaries are atrophying. Although others have studied attitudes toward Black-White intermarriage, we continue to know relatively little about the sources of opposition to this form of racial integration. Using previous research on stereotypes and racial attitudes as a point of departure and taking advantage of nationally representative data, the author set out to investigate the role of racial stereotypes in Whites' opposition to Black-White intermarriage. To sort out the influence of stereotypes relative to other factors, she includes psychological, contextual, sociodemographic, and political predictors in her analysis.

Keywords: interracial marriage; racial attitudes; social distance; stereotypes

In the past five decades, great changes have taken place in American race relations at the institutional level when de jure segregation and discrimination were outlawed. These changes have affected the legal status of interracial marriage. Although all but nine states had a law prohibiting interracial marriage at some point in their history, such laws were overturned in the historic 1967 Supreme Court ruling in *Loving v. Virginia* (Romano, 2003). As discriminatory laws were tumbling down, a new norm took hold prescribing vigorous

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adherence to the principles of racial equality and nondiscrimination (Mendelberg, 2001). Partly as a result, the rates of interracial marriage have shown tremendous growth. Yet, although the rate of intermarriage increased for all groups since the Supreme Court's decision overturning antimiscegenation laws, the Black-White intermarriages remain relatively uncommon (Kalmijn, 1993).

Although the legal environment defining American race relations has changed considerably in the past four decades, racism and discrimination as qualities of the American heart and mind, on one hand, and behavior on the other did not necessarily disappear, because it is harder to change long-standing attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors than it is to crush legal barriers to equality. Although most social scientists who have written on the subject of racial attitudes would agree that significant attitudinal changes have taken place in Whites' thinking about Blacks in the past four decades, substantial disagreement persists regarding how pervasive racism and discrimination still are, in part because accurately measuring racism and its behavioral manifestations has become increasingly challenging (Krysan & Couper, 2003; Mendelberg, 2001). Like racial attitudes in general, attitudes toward interracial marriage have undoubtedly become more favorable since the civil rights revolution in the 1960s (Romano, 2003). Yet, "hostility among whites, while diminished, has by no means disappeared . . . and [m]any [interracial] couples experience . . . mundane forms of harassment directed at them from both blacks and whites" (p. 249).

Without attempting to resolve the debate about the extent of racism and discrimination in the United States, my principal objective in this article is to investigate the influence of racial stereotypes on Whites' attitudes toward interracial marriage between a close member of their family and a Black person. To this end, I use the 2000 General Social Survey (GSS), a nationally representative survey that contains both a measure of approval of interracial marriage, measures of racial stereotypes, and a host of theoretically important predictors. Although the 2000 GSS contains questions about interracial marriage involving other racial and ethnic groups, I largely limit my analysis to Whites' sentiments concerning marrying Blacks because

the Black-White divide has been “the most tenacious of all American color lines” and the taboo against and the regulation of Black-White relationships have had a unique history (Romano, 2003, p. 8).

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Several fascinating treatises on the history of interracial marriage have been written by historians (e.g., Moran, 2001; Romano, 2003). Sociologists, on the other hand, have typically approached the subject of interracial marriage from the perspective of identifying the conditions under which Blacks and Whites are likely to intermarry (e.g., Blau, Becker, & Fitzgerald, 1984; Porterfield, 1982; Schoen & Wooldredge, 1989) or have qualitatively explored the experiences of interracial couples themselves, usually in in-depth interviews with a small number of couples (e.g., St. Jean, 1998).

Investigations of the levels and underpinnings of miscegenation attitudes have been rare and dated, in contrast, despite the fact that the earliest national poll on the subject was conducted in 1948 (Romano, 2003), and many surveys since have inquired about respondents' views on this subject. Extant attempts to capture the pulse of public opinion on this issue have been largely descriptive and registered steady increases in approval of interracial marriage (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997). The few existing analyses of the etiology of approval of interracial marriage have largely zeroed in on sociodemographic and (some) political predictors (Fang, Sidanius, & Pratto, 1998; Schuman et al., 1997; Wilson, 1996; Wilson & Jacobson, 1995; cf. Welch, Sigelman, Bledsoe, & Combs, 2001). In line with research on racial attitudes generally speaking, analyses of the underpinnings of attitudes toward interracial marriage demonstrate that younger, better educated, wealthier, less religiously devout, and ideologically liberal Whites are more approving of interracial marriage than their older, poorly educated, poorer, more religiously devout, and ideologically conservative counterparts. Individuals higher in social dominance orientation, in

addition, have been shown to disapprove of interracial marriage when it involves a high-status vis-à-vis low-status group (e.g., Whites and Blacks; Fang et al., 1998). Transcending previous studies of attitudes toward interracial marriage, an important investigation of contextual effects on racial attitudes demonstrates that interracial contact is a stronger predictor of attitudes toward interracial marriage than any sociodemographic or political factor (Welch et al., 2001).² In an innovative twist on attitudinal studies, finally, Yancey and Emerson (2001) examine voting behavior in the 1998 South Carolina referendum on removing the prohibition of interracial marriage from the state constitution. Using county-level data, Yancey and Emerson identify “a significant amount of animosity” toward interracial marriage and, in keeping with much attitudinal research, they show that voting on the antimiscegenation provision was most strongly associated with education, with the “more educated” counties more likely to vote for the proposition. In contrast with the individual-level studies, Yancey and Emerson find no multi-variate effects of age, income, or political or religious conservatism.

Extending previous research on the etiology of attitudes toward interracial marriage, my principal goals are to (a) investigate the role of racial stereotypes in Whites’ thinking about Black-White intermarriage and (b) update and extend what we know about attitudes toward interracial marriage by using more recent survey data from a nationally representative survey.

DATA

I use the 2000 GSS to examine non-Hispanic Whites’ attitudes toward a possibility that their close relative might marry a Black person. This survey contains measures of attitudes toward Black-White intermarriage and racial stereotypes as well as being chock-full of other theoretically relevant predictors.

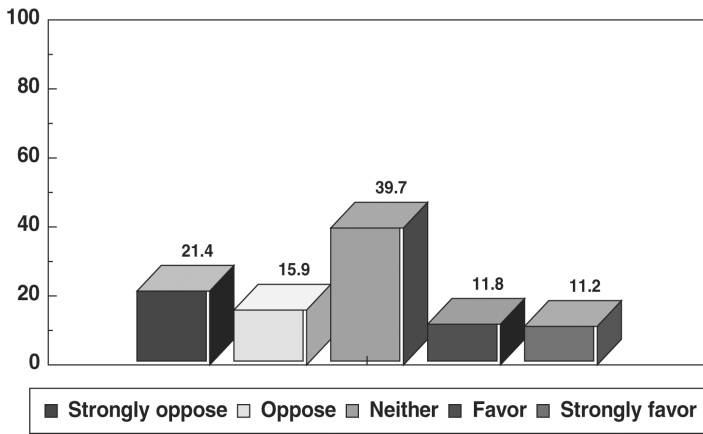


FIGURE 1 Whites' Attitudes Toward a Possibility That Their Close Relative Would Marry a Black Person

HOW DO WHITES FEEL ABOUT INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE?

I measure acceptance of interracial marriage with a question asking how strongly respondents would favor or oppose a marriage between their close family member and a Black person. The answers were scored on a 5-point scale anchored with *strongly oppose* (1) and *strongly favor* (5) end points, with *neither oppose nor favor* in the middle (3). The data depicted in Figure 1 below shed light on this question.

Even though attitudes toward interracial marriage in one's own family have become more positive over time (Romano, 2003; Wilson & Jacobson, 1995), Whites continue to be hesitant about embracing a Black person as a family member. Over a third of respondents (37.3%) strongly oppose or oppose interracial marriage involving a Black person and a close relative, and only less than a quarter (23%) embrace it or embrace it strongly. Almost 40% of respondents, finally, indicate that they would neither oppose nor favor such a marriage. Because disapproval of interracial marriage

could be construed as prejudicial and therefore normatively objectionable, some nonmeasurable portion of responses falling into the middle category undoubtedly represents an attempt to hide opposition to interracial marriage. Prejudice qua opposition to interracial marriage involving a close relative marrying a Black person is, in short, undoubtedly even higher than these numbers suggest.

Although the level of hostility to Black-White intermarriage is remarkable, some might argue that such opposition is simply a reflection of a personal preference for marrying people of the same race rather than a reflection of racial prejudice (or, in psychological terms, a manifestation of in-group favoritism). If Whites simply preferred to marry within their racial group as a matter of preference, they should be equally opposed to intermarriage involving their family members and members of any other racial and ethnic minority. The 2000 GSS data show, however, that Whites play favorites with some groups over others. Whites' opposition to interracial marriage involving a close family member to a Hispanic or Asian person is considerably lower (21.5% and 21.8%, respectively) than opposition to marriage involving a Black person (37.3%). Conversely, approval of marriage involving a close family member and a Hispanic or Asian person is considerably higher (31.9% and 30.8%, respectively) than approval of marriage between a close family member and a Black person (23%).

Given the considerable variation in attitudes toward interracial marriage between Blacks and Whites, it is important to consider what differentiates opponents from supporters of interracial marriage. This is a question to which I now turn.

SOURCES OF ANIMOSITY TO INTERRACIAL MARRIAGE: PRELIMINARY PORTRAIT

I start with an exploration of the bivariate linkages between Whites' attitudes toward interracial marriage involving a close family member and a number of theoretically relevant predictors and elaborate on my expectations below. Measures of all variables are described in the appendix. The relevant results are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Bivariate Correlations Between Approval of Interracial Marriage
Between a Close Family Member and a Black Person and
Theoretically Relevant Predictors^a

Principled support for nondiscrimination in marriage choices	.38***
Stereotyping of Blacks	-.36***
Region of residence	.19***
Community type	.14***
Interpersonal contact with Blacks	.19***
Sexuality-related attitudes	.31***
Education	.18***
Age	-.34***
Gender	.04
Income	-.07**
Religiosity	.08***
Party identification	.10***
Ideological self-identification	.21***
Interaction between region and community type	.26***
Interaction between region and age	-.25***

a. All measures with the exception of stereotyping, age, and income are coded with an expectation of a positive correlation with attitudes toward interracial marriage.

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

I consider several categories of “culprits” to illuminate the sources of attitudes toward a close family member crossing the color line by marrying a Black person: (a) stereotypes of Blacks as a group, (b) support for the principle of legal nondiscrimination in one’s marriage choices, (c) contextual factors, (d) sexuality-related attitudes, (e) political predictors, and (f) sociodemographic predictors. In addition to examining overall linkages between these variables and attitudes toward interracial marriage, I scrutinize potentially conditional effects (or interactions) involving respondents’ region of residence, age, and type of community in which they reside (more on this below).

WHITES’ STEREOTYPES OF BLACKS

Of most interest, I consider the impact of Whites’ stereotypes or generalized beliefs about Blacks as a group (Allport, 1958; Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Lee, Jussim, & McCauley, 1995). These stereotypes have been historically negative and focused on

beliefs about Blacks' intelligence, work ethic, violence, and morality (e.g., Drake, 1987; Katz & Braly, 1933). Although social psychological studies demonstrate that endorsement of negative stereotypes of Blacks has diminished over time (Madon et al. 2001), substantial minorities of Whites continue to think of Blacks as lazy, irresponsible, lacking in discipline, and aggressive or violent (Peffley, Hurwitz, & Sniderman, 1997; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993). Research in political psychology shows, in addition, that Whites' stereotypes of Blacks influence their political judgments in the areas of welfare and crime (Peffley et al., 1997) and shape White voters' responses to Black candidates for elective office (C. K. Sigelman, Sigelman, Walkosz, & Nitz, 1995).

Because stereotypes function as heuristics that may influence stereotype holders' judgments about specific members of a stereotyped group (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986), Whites who stereotype Blacks negatively should be more opposed to interracial marriage involving a close family member than Whites who reject the negative racial stereotypes. The stereotyping measure I develop is based on three questions asking respondents to place Blacks on 7-point semantic differential scales anchored with *unintelligent-intelligent*, *violent-not violent*, and *hardworking-lazy* end points.³ Because Whites are likely to evaluate other groups in reference to themselves (Blumer, 1958), I subtract their ratings of Blacks from their ratings of Whites on the same three dimensions.⁴ For further analysis, I combine the three individual ratings of Blacks into an overall stereotyping scale.⁵ When Whites' ratings of Blacks vis-à-vis their own in-group are aggregated in this manner, a whopping 82.3% see Blacks more negatively than Whites. As expected, negative stereotyping significantly undermines support for interracial marriage involving a close family member and a Black person. More positive conceptions of Blacks as a group, in contrast, are associated with a significantly greater likelihood of welcoming a Black in-law into the respondents' family.

SUPPORT FOR THE PRINCIPLE OF LEGAL NONDISCRIMINATION

Principled support for color-blindness in one's marriage choices should be associated with greater support for interracial marriage. I measure such principled support with a question asking whether respondents favor or oppose laws prohibiting Blacks and Whites from marrying. It is not surprising that my bivariate analysis confirms that Whites who endorse the principle of legal nondiscrimination are more likely to say they would also welcome a Black in-law than Whites who think that Blacks and Whites should not be allowed to marry.

CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS

In what region of the country and type of community Whites live and with whom they associate should be significantly linked with how they feel about race generally speaking, and interracial marriage more specifically (Welch et al., 2001). The American South was historically a bastion of racism (Kuklinski, Cobb, & Gilens, 1997), and by many accounts, Southern Whites continue to exhibit significantly higher levels of prejudice than Whites living outside the South (e.g., Kuklinski et al., 1997). My bivariate analysis confirms the expected regional differences in attitudes toward interracial marriage, with White southerners significantly more inclined than Whites living outside the South to oppose intermarriage involving a close family member.

Previous research on race also suggests that people who live in rural rather than urban areas, particularly in the South, tend to evince more racially conservative attitudes and behaviors (Romano, 2003; Yancey & Emerson, 2001). A significant bivariate correlation between community type and approval of interracial marriage in my analysis is consistent with the aforementioned analyses. Respondents living in more rural areas are more likely to hold antimiscegenation attitudes than respondents who live in more urban areas.

Not only can residential context, whether at the regional or local level, shape racial attitudes, but the contours of people's

interpersonal environments can have important implications for their racial attitudes as well. Research on intergroup contact demonstrates that intergroup contact can have salutary consequences for the development of favorable racial attitudes and erosion of negative racial stereotypes (Allport, 1958; Dixon & Rosenbaum, 2004; Pettigrew, 1998; L. Sigelman & Welch, 1993).⁶ To measure intergroup contact and its relationship to attitudes toward interracial marriage, I use a question asking respondents to report whether they personally know any Blacks. This question produces an affirmative response from a sizable 86.6% of respondents, though it unfortunately fails to capture variation in the quality or intimacy of this contact. Albeit relatively few White GSS respondents report not to personally know any Blacks, they are distinguished from the majority who personally know some Black people by their significantly greater likelihood of frowning upon an interracial marriage involving a member of their family.

SEXUALITY-RELATED ATTITUDES

Historical accounts demonstrate that the issue of sexuality has been tied to Whites' racial attitudes and actions going back to colonial days when interracial sexual relations were prohibited (Davis, 1988; Giddings, 1984; Mendelberg, 2001; Ruchames, 1969). During slavery and segregation, condemnation of sexual contact between Whites and Blacks provided a foundation for opposition to integration and equality (Welch et al., 2001, p. 116). Segregation laws were in fact rationalized "by the need to protect white women from 'bestial' black men," with Whites interpreting Blacks' desire "to achieve civil, political, and legal rights as a desire for 'social equality,' a coded term for interracial marriage" (Romano, 2003, p. 2). Early in the 20th century, Whites used their repulsion to interracial sex as a reason to oppose interracial marriage, particularly when it involved White women and Black men (Romano, 2003, p. 46).

Because ideas about normatively appropriate sexual conduct have been historically tied to Whites' views about interracial marriage, sexuality-related attitudes may continue to influence Whites'

attitudes toward interracial marriage to this day. I expect that Whites who approach various sexual subjects more openly should be more approving of a close family member's marriage to a Black person than Whites who subscribe to more restrictive views of sexuality. I measure sexuality-related attitudes with three questions querying respondents about their attitudes toward (a) premarital sex, (b) homosexuality, and (c) sex education in the public schools. Because responses to the three questions are strongly correlated and one dimensional,⁷ I combine them into an additive scale of sexuality-related attitudes. In line with my predictions, Whites who are higher in sexual openness are more likely to approve of a close relative marrying a Black person than Whites who frown upon premarital sex, homosexuality, and sex education in the public schools.

POLITICAL PREDICTORS

In keeping with previous research on racial attitudes, I anticipate that respondents' political predispositions—their partisan and ideological self-identifications in particular—may partially help to account for their attitudes toward interracial marriage (Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Sniderman & Piazza, 1993). To the extent that differences in approval of interracial marriage as a function of political predispositions surface in my analysis, I expect Democrats and ideological liberals to hold more favorable attitudes toward interracial marriage than Republicans and ideological conservatives. My examination of bivariate correlations is supportive of these expectations.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Previous research on racial attitudes generally speaking and attitudes toward interracial marriage more specifically, finally, points to a number of potentially important sociodemographic predictors. Some aspects of respondents' socioeconomic status are linked with their racial attitudes. Most research identifies education as one of the principal sociodemographic sources of racial attitudes, with the

well educated generally more racially liberal than their less well-educated counterparts (Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Schuman et al., 1997; L. Sigelman & Welch, 1993; Sniderman & Hagen, 1985; cf. Jackman & Muha, 1984).⁸ My bivariate analysis confirms this relationship. Respondents' financial status, in addition, has been linked with their racial attitudes (Schuman et al., 1997), and it matters somewhat in predicting attitudes toward interracial marriage in my analysis. The direction of the nexus between respondents' income, my measure of financial status, is such that the wealthier respondents are more likely to disapprove of a close relative marrying a Black person than their poorer counterparts.

Younger Whites tend to evince more favorable racial attitudes than older Whites, particularly on social distance questions (including approval of interracial marriage; Romano, 2003; Schuman et al., 1997; Wilson, 1996). In keeping with previous research, my analysis shows that older respondents are less likely to accept a Black person as an in-law than younger respondents.

Based on Welch and colleagues' (2001) examination of the relationship between residential context and racial attitudes in the greater Detroit area, I expect greater religiosity to be associated with more antagonistic attitudes toward interracial marriage. Greater religiosity, measured with a question about frequency of respondents' religious attendance, significantly reduces approval of a close relative marrying Black person.

Respondents' gender, previous research on racial attitudes suggests, may provide a partial clue to their feelings about interracial marriage. When men and women differ in their racial attitudes, women tend to evince more liberal racial attitudes than men (Schuman et al., 1997). One exception to this generalization involves the direction of gender differences on questions concerning very intimate contact between Blacks and Whites. Women, for example, have been shown to be more reluctant than men to send their children to a majority-Black school and *more* likely than men to disapprove of interracial marriage (although there appear to be no gender differences in attitudes toward antimiscegenation laws; Schuman et al., 1997, p. 235; cf. Hughes & Tuch, 2003; Wilson & Jacobson, 1995).

My bivariate analysis uncovers no significant effect of respondents' gender.

INTERACTION EFFECTS

Previous research on racial attitudes has generally not examined a possibility that some factors may jointly combine to influence approval of interracial marriage (cf. Wilson, 1996). I consider two sets of theoretically interesting interactions between variables on their own expected to be linked with Whites' views on interracial marriage.

Age-Related Differences in the Influence of Region

Although many students of the American South maintain that southerners continue to be more racially conservative than northerners, there may be generational differences in White southerners' racial attitudes. To the extent that younger southerners are less likely to endorse negative racial stereotypes and harbor animosity toward Blacks, they should resemble their northern counterparts to a greater degree than older southerners. Conversely, to the extent that older southerners may be more likely to accept negative racial stereotypes and harbor ill feelings toward Blacks, they may differ from their northern counterparts in their greater disapproval of Black-White intermarriage. In short, I hypothesize that the gap between southerners' and nonsoutherners' reactions to interracial marriage involving a close family member should be smaller among younger respondents and larger among older respondents. To test this hypothesis, I create an interaction term composed of respondents' region of residence and their age. A significant bivariate correlation coefficient between the interaction term and attitudes toward interracial marriage supports my hypothesis. Additional analysis demonstrates that the effect of respondents' region of residence on their views concerning interracial marriage is in fact considerably weaker among the youngest respondents (20 to 40; $r = .13, p < .01$) than among those in the older (43 to 55; $r = .23, p < .01$) and oldest (61 to 84; $r = .24, p < .01$) age groups.⁹

Regional Differences in the Impact of the Community Type

Historical research demonstrates that blunt disapproval of interracial couples by White Southerners is particularly common outside of the major metropolitan centers where “Black men with white women are often made to feel that they have stepped out of line, while their white partners are characterized as depraved and immoral” (Romano, 2003, p. 256). Urban versus rural differences in disapproval of interracial marriage, in short, should be particularly pronounced in the South and less pronounced among Whites living outside the South. To examine this predicted interaction, I create a multiplicative term composed of respondents’ region of residence and community type. In keeping with my prediction, the nexus between community type and attitudes toward interracial marriage is stronger in the South ($r = .22, p < .01$) and weaker outside the South ($r = .10, p < .05$).

**SOURCES OF ANIMOSITY TOWARD INTERRACIAL
MARRIAGE: MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS**

Although the bivariate results are suggestive, they do not conclusively establish what factors are more important than others in understanding attitudes toward Black-White intermarriage, because many of the individual predictors I examine are themselves interrelated (e.g., respondents’ ideological self-identification and their sexuality-related attitudes). In this section, therefore, I report the results of a multivariate regression analysis designed to sort out the relative importance of different predictors, with particular attention to the impact of racial stereotypes. To this end, I estimate the following multivariate regression model with approval of interracial marriage between a close family member and a Black person as the dependent variable and all the variables examined in the bivariate analysis above as predictors.¹⁰ The results of this multivariate estimation are shown in Table 2 below.

Save for a few exceptions, the multivariate results are consistent with the bivariate results. The impact of income, marginally significant in the bivariate analysis, washes out in the multivariate model.

TABLE 2
Sources of Attitudes Toward Interracial Marriage Between
a Close Family Member and a Black Person:
Multivariate Regression Results^a

	B	β
Principled support for nondiscrimination in marriage choices	.57	.13 ***
Stereotyping of Blacks	-.09	-.18 ***
Region of residence	.28	.12 **
Community type	.06	.04
Interpersonal contact with Blacks	.32	.07 ***
Sexuality-related attitudes	.08	.09 ***
Education	.02	.05 ***
Age	-.01	-.23 ***
Gender	.08	.03 *
Income	-.01	-.02
Religiosity	-.01	-.03
Party identification	.04	.06 ***
Ideological self-identification	.06	.08 ***
Interaction between region and community type	-.01	-.01
Interaction between region and age	.00	.02

a. All measures with the exception of stereotyping, age, and income coded with an expectation of a positive correlation with attitudes toward interracial marriage.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

The previously significant effects of religiosity, the type of community in which respondents live, and the two interaction terms disappear in the face of controls. The direction of the remaining linkages is consistent with the bivariate results. Whites who stereotype Blacks negatively are less likely to support the principle of color-blindness, do not personally know any Blacks, live in the South, have fewer years of formal education, have more restrictive sexual views, and are older, ideologically conservative, and Republican identifiers exhibit more lukewarm or actively hostile reactions to a possibility that a close member of their family might marry a Black person. Inspection of the size of the standardized regression coefficients demonstrates that age, stereotyping of Blacks as a group, and region of residence tied with principled support for nondiscrimination, in that order, are the four top predictors of variation in Whites' attitudes toward interracial marriage. Although the amount of variance predicted by the model is not exceedingly high ($R^2 = .21$), the

model accounts for a significant portion of variation in the data ($F = 41.70, p < .0001$).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

White support for laws prohibiting Blacks and Whites from marrying was at an all-time low in 2000, suggesting that the racial nondiscrimination norm has taken a fairly firm root in White public opinion (data available upon request). And Whites seem to have internalized this norm of color-blindness as they embrace it equally regardless of whether they are interviewed by Black or White interviewers (Krysan & Couper, 2003). Yet, although opposing anti-miscegenation laws, many Whites were at the same time not prepared to apply the principle of color-blindness to their personal realm by welcoming a Black in-law into their family. I have argued, contrary to the oft-heard personal preference argument, that this animosity to embrace interracial marriage involving a close family member is a manifestation of lingering racial prejudice. Perhaps because opposition to interracial marriage in one's own family has this seemingly plausible personal-preference alternative explanation are Whites as willing as they are to admit their discomfort with the idea of a Black in-law (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986).

That the levels of this form of prejudice are as high as they are is particularly remarkable at a time when the norms of nondiscrimination and racial equality are highly prized in American society (Mendelberg, 2001). This unfortunately confirms that many Whites do not see Blacks as equals and that contrary to the more optimistic interpretations of contemporary White racial attitudes (e.g., Sniderman & Piazza, 1993), racism continues to characterize many White hearts and minds. That prejudice rather than personal preference for marrying within one's own race drives White opposition to interracial marriage is in part evident from an examination of the etiology of this opposition. For one thing, Whites who are most likely to disapprove of Black-White intermarriage endorse negative stereotypes of Blacks to a greater degree than Whites who have more benevolent views of interracial marriage. For another,

resistance to interracial marriage involving Blacks and Whites is particularly strong in the South, an area that has been historically infamous for its racism and, by many accounts, is still a stronghold of racism today.

On a more positive note, my analysis uncovers significant generational differences in opposition to interracial marriage, with younger people less likely to harbor hostility toward Black-White intermarriage. In fact, age predicts attitudes toward interracial marriage better than any predictor in my multivariate model. This may bode well for the future of Whites' attitudes toward Blacks (cf. Wilson, 1996).

In contrast with previous research on racial attitudes, my analysis shows that sociodemographic factors as a group—with the exception of respondents' age—do not make a strong showing in predicting sentiment toward interracial marriage. Perhaps it is most surprising that education is a comparatively unimportant influence on approval of interracial marriage. Upon reflection, my finding concerning the linkage between education and attitudes toward interracial marriage is actually not that surprising in light of an important strand of previous research on political tolerance (e.g., Sullivan, Piereson, & Marcus, 1982). Work on political tolerance demonstrates that sociodemographic factors as a group are relatively unimportant predictors of political tolerance in the presence of controls for psychological and political predictors (Sullivan et al., 1982). This may in part explain the relatively poor showing of education in my model—transcending previous research on the sources of attitudes toward interracial marriage, my model contains a number of psychological, political, and contextual predictors in addition to the standard sociodemographics. In fact, sexuality-related attitudes, ideological self-identification, and interpersonal contact with Blacks, I show, are at least as important as educational attainment in understanding the sources of attitudes toward Black-White intermarriage.

One issue that needs to be addressed is how accurately the question I used as my dependent variable captured individual differences in approval of interracial marriage. This question may be reactive—because it is transparent with regard to its intent, it undoubtedly prompts some respondents to mouth

socially desirable responses rather than reveal their true attitudes. Thus, responses to this question may overestimate the extent of approval of interracial marriage, a normatively appropriate response, and underestimate the extent of disapproval of interracial marriage, a norm-violating response. Although this question may not perfectly capture the extent of approval of interracial marriage, there are several reasons to suggest that social desirability concerns have not greatly altered reports of Whites' attitudes toward interracial marriage. First, Whites would have shied away from expressing negative attitudes toward interracial marriage if they had been greatly concerned about social desirability (Madon et al., 2001). The pattern of attitudes I have described above clearly does not fit this scenario. Second, others have argued that Whites' answers to social distance questions, including those about interracial marriage, are not greatly affected by social desirability because Whites' answers to questions about Black-White intermarriage are consistent regardless of whether they are interviewed by White or Black interviewers (Krysan & Couper, 2003). Although questions tapping Whites' approval of Black-White intermarriage may be at least somewhat reactive, finally, answers to such questions are arguably more informative than answers to many other, easier questions about race (such as questions concerning the principle of racial equality). Answers to questions about interracial marriage, argued a lawyer representing a Black defendant from Connecticut appealing his conviction, may be viewed as "an X-ray of the heart . . . [i]f you're against interracial marriage, . . . you're a racist at heart" (Romano, 2003, p. 289).

Because measures of attitudes toward interracial marriage may be less vulnerable to social desirability effects than measures of other racial attitudes, social scientists interested in the more overtly political dimensions of racial attitudes might be well advised to use them as an indicator of racial prejudice. Reliance on such a simple yet theoretically appealing measure may help to resolve the continuing debate about the best ways to measure racial prejudice (e.g., Feldman & Huddy, 2005). Analysis I do not report in the article suggests, in fact, that attitudes toward interracial marriage qua measure of racial prejudice have important political implications

because they are strongly linked with Whites' views on government spending to help Blacks and their attitudes toward affirmative action.

More research on the etiology of attitudes toward interracial marriage would be worthwhile. One question future research could address is whether and how Whites' reactions to interracial marriage differ depending on the gender of the Black person who might join their family as an in-law. Historically, White women were stigmatized by their involvement with Black men to a much greater degree than White men who were involved with Black women (Romano, 2003). If such distinctions are lingering, one can expect more opposition to a Black son-in-law than a Black daughter-in-law. An examination of attitudes toward other forms of interracial marriage would also be desirable (e.g., intermarriage involving Whites and Hispanics). Another question that merits attention because it would be an even more reliable x-ray of the heart is the question of how Whites would themselves feel about marrying a Black person. It would be worthwhile, finally, to compare and contrast the levels and etiology of attitudes toward interracial marriage using obtrusive and unobtrusive measures.

APPENDIX

Measures of All Variables Used in the Analyses

Stereotyping of Blacks: an additive scale composed of Whites' ratings of Blacks on three semantic differential scales (unintelligent-intelligent, lazy-hardworking, violent-nonviolent) subtracted from their average perceptions of Whites' on the same scales (see text above for a more elaborate description; lower scores = more positive)

Region of residence: 1 = South (south Atlantic, west south central, and east south central), 2 = non-South (New England, Middle Atlantic, east north central, west north central, and Mountain Pacific)

Community type: 1 = farm/country home, 2 = country village, 3 = small town, 4 = suburbs/outskirts, 5 = big city

Interpersonal contact with Blacks: Do you personally know any Blacks? 1 = no, 2 = yes

Sexuality-Related Attitudes: an additive scale composed of responses to three questions measuring approval of homosexuality, premarital sex, and sex education in the public schools (lower scores = more disapproving)

Education: number of years of formal schooling (from 0 to 20)

Age: from 18 to 89

Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female

Income: coded from “low” to “high”

Religiosity: a 9-point scale anchored with *more than once a week* (0) and *never* (8)

Marital status: 1 = married, widowed, divorced, or separated, 2 = never married

Party Identification: 7-point scale anchored with *strong Republican* (0) and *strong Democrat* (6)

Ideological Self-Identification: 7-point scale anchored with *extremely conservative* (1) and *extremely liberal* (7)

Interaction between region and community type: a multiplicative term composed of respondents’ region of residence and community type

Interaction between region and age: a multiplicative term composed of respondents’ region of residence and age.

NOTES

1. I use the term *Black* in keeping with an established convention in some Black studies scholarship (see Molefi Kete Asante & Ama Mazama, 2005; Molefi Kete Asante & Maulana Karenga, 2006).

2. One caveat to keep in mind when thinking about this study, however, is that it is not clear how tightly the findings based on this study of attitudes in the greater Detroit area generalize to the country as a whole.

3. I reverse coded the last item in my analysis so that a low score on each question corresponds to a more negative judgment.

4. Whites who got a score of 0 on this measure perceive Blacks exactly the same as their own group, those who received a positive score see Blacks more or less negatively on that trait, and those assigned a negative score saw Blacks more or less positively on the same trait.

5. Following a factor analysis in which one factor, with an eigenvalue of 1.90, accounting for 63.42% variance emerged.

6. Although contact usually works under some highly specific conditions (e.g., equal status contact in cooperative rather than competitive situations), some research shows that contact can sometimes foster more positive intergroup attitudes and dilute negative group stereotypes even when it does not fulfill the theoretically important conditions.

7. Based on factor analysis and reliability scaling results.

8. Attitudes toward affirmative action are an exception to the rule, with those in the middle categories of educational attainment least supportive of government aid to Blacks (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997).

9. For purposes of estimating this interaction, I divided the sample into three age groups, each of which comprises approximately a third of all White respondents.

10. I use the mean substitution procedure to recover a majority of cases that would otherwise be lost due to listwise deletion.

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Ewa A. Golebiowska is an associate professor of political science at Wayne State University. Her research interests focus on public opinion and political psychology, broadly speaking, and intergroup attitudes, including political tolerance and racial attitudes, more specifically. Her research has appeared in such journals as The Journal of Politics, Political Behavior, American Politics Research, and International Journal of Public Opinion Research.