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MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIOLOGICAL PRACTICE.

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Finding Needles in the Haystack: Identifying White Racial Progressives in a Colorblind Society

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Abstract

Expanding on Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s work on white racial progressives in *Racism without Racists* (2003), this work examines white racial progressives using the 2000 General Social Survey because of its inclusion of a module that examines racial interaction that contains variables that can be used as proxy measures of white racial progressives. I employ multiple regression analyses of whites’ attitudes about African-Americans that reflect Black acceptance as measured by their acceptance of racial intermarriage. Following previous research (Bobo 2000) the model assesses racial attitudes among whites that serve to distinguish white racial progressives that favor interracial Black-white marriage. My findings show that political liberalness, residence outside of the southern states, a general feeling of closeness to Black people, and support of Affirmative Action policy predicts positive attitudes toward Black-white interracial marriage. The paper ends by suggesting that future researchers employ a more comprehensive modeling of white racial progressiveness that reflects the level of interaction with Black people.

**Keywords:** race, colorblind racism, whiteness studies, racial progressivity
Introduction

The power whites have to facilitate racial justice in our society is undeniably well established, (Philipsen 2003, Reiland 2007). In a post-civil rights era America, racism has been transformed in the consciousness of many whites. It has in a sense gone underground and has led to many to deny the existence of continued white privilege and Black oppression (Brown, Carnoy, Currie, Duster, Oppenhiemer, Shultz, and Wellman 2003). In *Racism without Racists* (2003), Bonilla-Silva examines whites’ attitudes toward race in contemporary society. He does this by using shared attributes of whites in his study. This research follows in this tradition by seeking to utilize and extend Bonilla-Silva through the development of a quantifiably testable model of white racial progressivity, and testing it with a national sample. Additionally, this work uses the insights and findings of the work done by Lawrence Bobo and colleagues (Bobo and Johnson 2004, Bobo & Charles 2009). I do this work because of my hope that it could be useful for researchers on race and advocates of social and racial justice. Particularly, I hope the work helps further anti-racist efforts in the United States.
In the literature review that follows, I pay attention to three theoretical frameworks. These three theoretical frameworks are: whiteness studies, racial formation theory, and color-blind racism theory. I discuss interdisciplinary whiteness studies in order to explore the historical drive behind studying what is often deemed the "default" racial category. Second, I explore racial formation theory (and also the "contact hypothesis") and introduce the category of "racially progressive whites". The potential characteristics of racially progressive whites derived from research guided by racial formation theory will also be examined. Finally, colorblind racism theory is addressed in order to identify the ways in which racism continues to be expressed today. These theories are tied to the level of analysis: colorblind racism theory provides micro-analysis, contact hypothesis provides meso-analysis, and racial formation theory provides macro level analysis.

Literature Review

In the words of John Hartigan, "whiteness [studies] has emerged as much from a series of distinct disciplinary developments as it has in response to the ongoing need for more effective analyses of how racial
dominance is reproduced” (1997, 496). In other words, whiteness studies developed as part of the nationwide attempt to decolonize academia. Rather than ignore whiteness as if it is the natural or default racial category, whiteness studies focuses on those who are reproducing themselves as the dominant group and the production and maintenance of “whiteness” as a racial category. Whiteness has been studied from an interdisciplinary perspective. In general “whiteness studies” scholars see their task as documenting that which usually goes unseen: the racial privilege and advantage that structure the lives, attitudes, and actions of white people (Hartigan 1997). Since “whiteness studies” is a paradigmatic orientation and not full-blown theoretical statement, I choose to let it frame this research.

As Ignatiev (1966) and Hartigan (1997) discussed, whiteness studies is simply the act of calling attention to the dominant groups of society and examining them from an academic standpoint. The focuses of these studies is to show how power and privileges are awarded to whites characterized by a racial hierarchy (Ignatiev 1996, Hartigan 1997). In this research, I use it as a frame to contextualize racial formation theory and
colorblind racism theory. This is because whiteness studies often takes into consideration American history, and “shows us how whiteness evolved alongside other privilege systems that are often interpellated within, or intertwined with, white supremacy” (Moon 2005: 89) including gender and class.

Since the category of “whiteness” is a consciousness that is ideologically determined and therefore a result of the historical process of developing the U.S. racial order, racial formation theory also undergirds this research (Roediger 1999). Racial formation theory posits that race is “defined and contested throughout society, in both collective action and personal practice” (Omi & Winant, 1986: 61). Racial formation theory provides us a glimpse at how race is produced and formed in the everyday interactions between people (Roediger 1999). Racial boundary maintenance like social distancing that reifies white privilege and racial hierarchies is performed by both whites and non-whites (Bonilla-Silva 2003).

Survey and interview research have found racial attitudes among whites to be varied (Bobo 2004, Garam & Brooks 2010). Some question
whether racial consciousness has itself shifted. As Bonilla-Silva (2003) suggests, overtly racist groups do still exist in our society but they are relegated to the extreme margins. The majority of society emphasizes the impact of the Civil Rights Movement and attempts to suggest that race is no longer an issue. Ours is an era of “color-blind racism” in which society ignores race as a factor while maintaining the social structures that create and maintain white privilege and Black oppression. While political rhetoric suggests that all of Americans live in a society modeled after Martin Luther King, Jr.’s dream; a society in which content of character and not skin-tone determine a person’s worth, the reality is that there are continued disparities in education and income between people of color and whites (Bonilla-Silva 2003).

Rather than taught openly in schools and among families, legitimations of white privilege are now hidden under supposed race neutral values such as “meritocracy” and “pull your-self up by the bootstraps” economic views (Bell 2003, Ford, Johnson & Maxwell 2010). Racism has crept into the unconscious portion of America’s white collective habitus, as Bourdieu (1992) aptly defines as dispositions and
predispositions that determine, to a large extent, how we view the world and our proclivities to act in it. So how do we determine the presence or absence of beliefs that are not overtly stated, that many Americans do not realize they carry? Fortunately, one does not need to know the "unconscious". Instead, ideology can be viewed as intertwined with socialization and therefore interpellation of what it means to be white can be achieved.

Researchers interested in understanding racialized views in an era of “color-blindness”, have determined many different attitudinal indicators that attempt to determine peoples’ views on race while avoiding as many social desirability problems as possible. These proxies allow researchers interested in whiteness studies to examine variations in whites’ opinions about race in an indirect fashion (Hunt & Wilson 2009, Garam & Brooks 2010). For example, Hunt and Wilson (2009) created a Perceived Discrimination Index (PDI) for their quantitative macro-level research on racial divisions about the importance of an Obama presidency.
Alternatively, utilizing a micro-level qualitative method, Bonilla-Silva (2003) determined a number of very specific criteria related to political and social opinions in order to differentiate “color blind whites” from the group he has labeled “white racial progressives”. Unlike most white people, white racial progressives “support affirmative action and interracial marriage, and they recognize the significance of discrimination in the United States (Bonilla-Silva 2003: 132)”. Other social researchers have also identified beliefs regarding interracial marriage (Golebiowska 2007, Bobo & Charles 2009, Garam & Brooks 2010) and liberal political views (Bobo & Charles 2009, Ford et al. 2010, Garam & Brooks 2010). A number of researchers seeking to determine ways of measuring prejudice in our era of “color-blind racism” have also utilized attitudinal indicators pertaining to police use of force or law enforcement and ethics. This is because a large body of research demonstrates the Black-white divide when it comes to support of police use of force (Barkan & Cohn 1998, Halim & Stile 2001, Bobo & Johnson 2004, Rice & Piquero 2005, Weitzer & Tuch 2005).

Attitudinal indicators pertaining to beliefs about reasons for poverty among people of color have also been used to provide glimpses of the true prejudices hiding behind the color-blind façade. This is because
many whites trend toward using individual choice reasons for explaining Blacks’ low socio-economic status rather than a “system-challenging” structuralist option, thus making it another social phenomenon that indicates racialized beliefs (Bobo & Johnson 2004, Hunt 2007, Garam & Brooks 2010). Public opinion questions pertaining to discrimination and reasons for racial divides in major social institutions have also been used to identify racially prejudiced belief systems among whites hiding behind a “color-blind racist” ideology (Bobo & Johnson 2004, Bobo & Charles 2009, Garam & Brooks 2010).

In accord with Bonilla-Silva, Halim and Stile (2001) and Hunt (2007) locate “racially progressive whites” in the grouping of young women who come from working or lower class backgrounds, who are educated, liberal, and not from the Southern states (Hunt 2007, Halim & Stile 2001). While age, gender, political affiliation and region of occupancy have been found to strongly predict attitudes associated with white “racial progressiveness”, they must be contextualized to help aid in understanding their consciousnesses. A major contextualizing factor is the level and nature of frequent interaction with Black people.
(Frankenberg 1993, Schofield, Hausmann, Ye & Woods, 2010), a dynamic that has been thoroughly explored and dubbed the "contact hypothesis" (Sigelman & Welch 1993, Smith 1994, Martin, Trego & Nakayama 2010). Also emphasizing the importance of the quality and nature of the interracial interactions is the "racial threat theory". This concept posits that intergroup contact can actually lead to an increase in racist beliefs (Sharp 2006), rather than a decrease, especially if the intergroup contact is unwanted, or lacking in depth and meaning; in other words, if emotional connectedness does not develop (Martin et al. 2010).

Emotional connectedness to Black people is highly indicative of racial progressivity, and has even been used as a measure of racial attitudes. This is because an era of "color-blind racism" requires social distancing from Blacks without outright racism. When non-Blacks indicate that they do not feel close or emotionally connected to Black people, they are performing racial boundary maintenance and supporting white privilege by attempting to position themselves higher in the racial hierarchy by socially distancing themselves from people representing the bottom of the racial hierarchy (Bonilla-Silva 2003).
What is it about a high level of meaningful interaction with people of color that creates and fosters “progressive racial” attitudes in whites? Qualitative research demonstrates that within Black and Latino cultures, counter-narratives and resistance discourse abounds (Feagin 1970; 2000, Blauner 1972, Brunson 2007, Glover 2009). These counter stories directly contradict dominant assumptions about social matters including law enforcement and social policy. Counter-narratives serve the purpose of continuing a shared racial identity that resists oppression by the dominant group (Faegin & Vera 1995).

When whites become exposed to these alternative paradigms, some may shift their ideologies away from white-normalcy and turn toward a paradigm of civil justice for all (Alcoff 1998). One qualitative study examining race, neighborhood context, and the development of opinions pertaining to law enforcement suggests that they do (Brunson & Weitzer 2009). Whites who are exposed to Black people and their collective experience may begin to view social situations in a way that is similar to Black peoples' views and therefore opposed to the traditional white views. These whites may even come to be treated negatively by
law enforcement agents that view them as “guilty by association [with Blacks]”. Counter-narratives told by these whites then are a product of listening to Blacks’ counter-narratives and through the development of their own understanding of racism and oppression.

Theoretical Model

From the qualitative scholarly literature on white racial progressives, a model of which whites are racially progressive emerges. By reorganizing the characteristics of white racial progressives from the literature review, two categories of variables can be created: salient demographic variables and counter-hegemonic white racial narrative attitudes. The first category consists of age, sex, class, and region. The second set of variables reflects the adoption of counter narratives among whites to the hegemonic white racial narrative and is the dependent variables in the study.
Statement of the Problem

The importance of race in our society has not lessened; however, the rhetoric surrounding race has changed. Racism against people of color is now disguised with faux liberalism and meritocratic oratory. In the face of continued inequality and racial disadvantage in the United States, many whites refuse to see race as a structuring principle. However among whites there is a progressive group who not only see race as valid and important, but who are likely to reject the dominant notions of race.

While qualitative social research on whiteness studies and race has done much to develop how whites view race, quantitative research has not made good use of it. This study aims to do this. In particular, a
quantitative model is specified using Bonilla-Silva’s and Lawrence Bobo’s discussions of the white racial progressives as a base and then extends that research into a quantitative assessment of contextual/mediating variables on the adoption of attitudes of white racial progressivity among whites. In other words, using quantitative analysis, views on racial topics that counter the dominant racial discourse will be used in order to determine which characteristics identified by qualitative researchers of race prove statistically significant as indicators of racial progressivity. The hypotheses for the research are: (1) among whites, people that have high levels of interaction with Blacks will be more racially progressive than people with lower interracial interaction rates and (2) among whites, those with positive attitudes of affirmative action policies will be more racially progressive than those who oppose affirmative action.

Methods
This study uses descriptive and multivariate analyses to assess racist attitudes of white Americans in relation to their level of interaction with Blacks. The 2000 General Social Survey (GSS) sample used in the study consists of 2,817 respondents. All respondents are adults older than 17 and reside in the United States. The proportions of this survey closely resemble their
representation of the U.S. population. The data were collected under the auspices of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago on nearly an annual basis between 1972 and 1991, and on a semiannual basis since 1992. The GSS was designed to function as a trend-based source for research regarding social indicators in American society and is commonly used to assess the American public’s attitudes about a wide range of social issues. A split file was used to isolate our sample of 2,213 whites from the entire sample of all races, in order to examine only the racial attitudes of whites. From this sample, nested regression models are tested that analyze the impact each of the independent variables has on the level of racial progressivity.

**Dependent Variable**

The GSS provides a variable “close relative marry a Black person”, which indicates a respondent’s response to the question, “Do you approve of a close relative marring a Blacks person?” This variable is ordinal with a range of scores from 1 (indicating “approve”) through 7 (indicating “disapprove”). For the purposes of this research, the variable was reverse coded so that more racially progressive responses received higher scores. Any responses outside of the one through seven range
were moved into the “System Missing” category in order to obtain truer results. This indicator was chosen because of its historic link to racial attitudes both in Sociology and Anthropology. As discussed in the previous literature review, feelings about racial intermarriage are intertwined with ethnic and racial boundary maintenance, social assimilatory models, and as proposed solutions to racist attitudes and beliefs (Bonilla-Silva 2003, Feagin & Vera 1995, Brown et al 2003). In a color-blind racist society, any survey question that directly asks if a person is racist would be invalid, due to issues of social desirability (Bonilla-Silva 2003).

**Independent Variables**

As indicated in the literature review, there are a few demographic characteristics that have been shown to correlate with “racial progressiveness” among whites. These variables include age, gender, class, region, and political views and are used in the first model. The political views variable is a scale variable with a range of one through seven, where one equals extremely liberal and seven equals extremely conservative. For the purposes of this research, the political views
variable was reverse coded so that the scale ranges from one, meaning “extremely conservative”, to seven meaning “extremely liberal”.

The region of residence was determined by recoding the variable “region” so that people from non-southern states were contrasted to people from southern states, using the value of one to represent people outside the south, and the value of zero to be applied to people from southern states. The variable for sex was recoded into “female” by applying the value of one to female respondents and a value of zero to male respondents. The variables “age” and “class” were also recoded, but only for the purposes of removing “no answer” or “don’t know” responses.

In the second and third tables, additional concepts contributed by the literature are also incorporated. These variables include “opposite race live in neighborhood”, “Blacks in the community” and “how close respondent feels toward Blacks”. All of the variables in the second model were cleaned so that responses like “no answer” and “don’t know” were removed. “opposite race live in neighborhood” and “Blacks in community” both indicate whether the respondent live near Black people
or in integrated communities, and are coded one for "yes" and zero for "no". Later, a new reduced nested model table (see table 3) is introduced in which the two neighborhood variables are removed from the equations in order to address issues of multicollinearity.

In addition to variables indicating that a respondent lives near Black people, "feel close to Blacks", a variable that indicates how close the respondents feels toward Black people, was also included. This variable is a scale variable that ranges from one through nine, where higher scores indicate higher levels of feelings of closeness. As previously discussed, high levels of physical interaction with Black people can lead to racial progressivity as described by the "contact hypothesis" or could generate the opposite ideology as demonstrated with the "racial threat" theory. Rather than measure the actual physical interracial interaction levels, "feel close to Blacks" measures the subjective emotional quality of those interactions. It is this concept that helps to determine how interracial interactions will affect whites: high levels of physical interaction with Black people that lead to the development of emotional connectedness contributes to a racially progressive ideology
As a "feeling thermometer", this variable measures how closely one feels to Blacks in order to determine their level of racial progressivity. This is because a society defined by "color blind racism" requires pernicious and subtle social distancing from people identified as Black, rather than outright overt racism (Bonilla-Silva 2004).

The third model incorporates "affirmative action", a variable that measures the respondent's feelings about affirmative action laws. This variable was originally coded with a range from one through four, or from "in strong support of affirmative action" to "in strong opposition" to the policy. For the purposes of this research, this variable was reverse coded so that responses indicating support of affirmative action received higher values. This variable was included to measure whites' ability to see the structural nature of racism as it exists in our society and to represent the concept of "counter-narratives" as described in the literature review. The counter-narrative concept can be quantitatively measured using the "affirmative action" variable because the majority of white Americans may disapprove of Affirmative Action on the grounds that it discriminates...
against whites. This narrative represents the dominant narrative in our society today. But the small minority of whites who approve of Affirmative Action employment policies produce a narrative that runs counter to the dominant one, thus contextualizing whites' interactions with Black people.

These three multiple regression models will serve to examine how much of the variation in whites' racial attitudes vary based on the various categories described in the conceptual model. Two separate nested model tables will each demonstrate three equations. The second nested model tables differs only in that two of the interracial interaction variables are removed due to problems with multicollinearity. The two tables are provided in the following results section. Later, a discussion of the results is provided, along with a conclusion and suggestions for future research.

Results

Before discussing the results of the regression models, it is important to note the descriptive statistics for the included variables. Regarding the control variables, there were 997 men and 1,216 women
included in the sex variable. The class variable included a total of 2,213 people with a mean of 2.52 and a median and mode of 3.0. The age of respondents ranged from eighteen to eighty-nine, with a mean of 47.29, a median of 45.00 and a mode of 38.00. Again, 2,213 people are represented in this indicator. The variable designed for this research that indicates respondents' region of residence as either from southern states or from outside of southern states, consists of 2,213 respondents of which 1,472 resided outside southern states and 741 respondents who reside in the south.

There are three variables indicating level of interaction with Black people: two of which specifically indicate integrated neighborhoods ("Blacks in community", and "opposite race in neighborhood"). Response levels for these variables are lower than the variables used for controls. For "Blacks in community", 565 responded "yes" and 363 responded "no" resulting in a total sample size of 1,285. Regarding the "opposite race in neighborhood" variable, 1,317 responded "yes" and 729 responded "no" for a total sample of 2,046. These two variables are removed due to multicollinearity in the second nested model table (table 3). The third
variable added that represents level of interaction with Black people; the variable that asks respondents to report on how close they feel to Black people on a scale from one to nine, remains in both tables as indicative of the level of interaction whites have with Blacks. This variable included 1,434 respondents in total with a mean of 5.15 and a median and mode of 5.0. The final independent variable added in the third equation examines feelings about affirmative action policy. The variable is represented as an ordinal variable that ranges from one through four with the higher scores indicating positive attitudes toward affirmative action. The mean for this variable is 3.37 and the median and mode are both 4.0 with a total sample size of 1362. The dependent variable, “close relative marry a Black person” included a total of 1,782 people responded, with a mean of 3.25 and a median and mode of 3.0.

Linear regression estimates the coefficients of the linear equation, involving one or more independent variables that best predict the value of the dependent variable. The first of the following three tables includes one linear regression equation that examines feelings toward Black people. The second and third tables include three equations each and
measure feelings regarding racial intermarriage. They explain the slopes, standard errors and standardized beta scores for each variable as well as the overall R and adjusted R-squared for each model and sample sizes. The first table is provided in order to illuminate the racial formation component presented in the literature review. The second nested model table includes a total of seven independent variables. The second nested model table demonstrates a reduced form of the first table in which two insignificant variables were removed ("Blacks in community" and "other races live nearby"). This was done in order to increase the sample size and to reduce the multicollinearity issues that occurred when the two variables were included in the model.
Table 1: Nested Model: “Feeling Thermometer”

Dependent Variable: "Feel close to Blacks" = how close does the respondent feel to Blacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.017***</td>
<td>-.156 (.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.052 (.104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>-.081</td>
<td>-.026 (.083)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>.135***</td>
<td>.099 (.037)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-South</td>
<td>-.141</td>
<td>-.034 (.110)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Constant                | 5.634*** (.297) |
R-square                | .041 |
Adjusted R-Square       | .037 |
N=sample                | 1357 |

Note: Numbers in parenthesis are standard errors
* p<.01  ** p<.001  *** p<.0001
Source General Social Survey 2000. Split file: whites only

As discussed in the literature review, racial formation theory suggests that demonstrating emotional connectedness to Black people is highly indicative of racial progressivity. This is because in an era of “color-blind racism” whites socially distance themselves from Blacks rather than express explicit racism. When non-Blacks indicate that they do not feel close or emotionally connected to Blacks, they are performing racial boundary maintenance and supporting white privilege by attempting to
position themselves higher in the racial hierarchy through socially distancing themselves from Blacks (Bonilla-Silva 2003).

The first table demonstrates that age and liberal political views are the strongest entered predictors of whether a white person feels close to Blacks (as indicated by the standardized beta scores of -.156 for age and .099 for political views). The relationship between age and feeling close to Blacks is a negative one. This suggests that older whites are less likely than younger whites to identify a feeling of closeness to Black people. On the other hand, the relationship between political liberalness and feeling a level of closeness to Blacks is positive. This finding shows that whites who self-identify as more liberal are also more likely to have a feeling of closeness to Black people. Tables two and three use “feel close to Blacks” as an independent variable in determining views on racial intermarriage, along with other independent variables age, political views, region, and sex. Later in the model “contact hypothesis” variables and an affirmative action “counter narrative” variable are added.
Table 2: Nested Model Including Racial Integration Variables

**Dependent Variable:** “approve of close relative marrying Black person” reversed scale: 1= strongly oppose, 5= strongly favor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>-.326</td>
<td>.022***</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>.024***</td>
<td>.305</td>
</tr>
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<td>(.002)</td>
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<td>(.003)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.005)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.128*</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>-.026</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>-.036</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.055)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.096)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.143)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>.087*</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.048</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(.076)</td>
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<td>(.114)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>.140***</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>.138***</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td>.129**</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(.034)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.050)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-South</td>
<td>.434***</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.350**</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>.109</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(.101)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.143)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Races Live Nearby</td>
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<td>-----</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.111)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.166)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks in Community</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-.094</td>
<td>-.123</td>
<td>-.123</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.102)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.154)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel Close to Blacks</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>.166***</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td>.144***</td>
<td>.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.026)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(.039)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Affirmative Action</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>.211**</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(.075)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.713 (.154)</td>
<td>2.089 (.315)</td>
<td>2.501 (.469)</td>
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<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
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<td>.231***</td>
<td>.278***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-Square</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.220</td>
<td>.251</td>
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<tr>
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<td>250</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in parenthesis are standard errors
* p<.01 ** p<.001 *** p<.0001
Source General Social Survey 2000. Split file: whites only

The first block includes the control variables as derived from the literature review, and includes age, sex, class, political views, and region.

These variables explain 18.0% of the variation in approval of a close family member marrying a Black person. The sex and class variables were
significant at the .01 level, and show a direct relationship to the dependent variable. Age, on the other hand, is inversely related to the dependent variable so that the older one is, the less likely he/she is to approve of racial intermarriage. The standardized beta score (-.326) indicates that the relationship between age and beliefs about interracial marriage is the strongest of all independent variables. Its relationship to the independent variable indicates that older whites are less likely to approve of racial intermarriage.

Also significant at the 0.001 level were region and age. People living outside of the southern states were more likely to approve of interracial marriage, than people living in southern states. Political views range from extremely conservative to extremely liberal and are directly related to the dependent variable, so that the more liberal one is, the more likely to approve of a close relative marrying a Blacks person. The political views variable was significant at the .001 level and has a standardized beta score (.163). This relationship remained significant throughout the nested model, after adding the “contact hypothesis” and “views on affirmative action” variables.
For the next block of the equation, variables representing the “contact hypothesis” were included along with the previous variables. This equation explains 23.1% of the variation in opinions regarding interracial marriage; an increase of 5% from the first block. Age, political views, and region of residence are the only three variables from the first block that remain significant after introducing the “contact hypothesis” variables. Of those three variables, age and political views remain relatively unchanged regarding strength and direction of the relationship, however the strength of the “region of residence” variable decreased by nearly 0.1, indicating that the newly introduced contact hypothesis variables may mitigate the effect of the region variable. This could also be the result of collinearity inflating the standard errors and reducing “significance”, as suggested by the range of tolerance scores (from .927 through .978 for all entered variables).

Of the newly introduced variables, only “feel close to Blacks” was significant; the variable that indicates how close a respondent feels toward Black people. This variable demonstrates a direct relationship to the dependent variable and is significant at the .001 level. The other two
variables used to demonstrate levels of cross-racial interaction were not significant and the collinearity diagnostics suggested that there multicollinearity was an issue in this block of the model. This issue was addressed by removing the two variables for the second nested model table (see table 2).

The final block incorporates attitudinal variable “affirmative action”, the variable indicating respondents’ views on affirmative action. This equation explains 27.8% of variation in attitudes toward interracial marriage; an increase of nearly 10% from the first Blacks, and nearly 5% from the second model. All contact and control variables from the previous equations were included. In this equation, only “affirmative action”, “feel close to Blacks”, “political views”, and “age” remain significant. The newly entered variable “affirmative action” also demonstrated a direct relationship to the dependent variable (with a standardized beta of .161). All other variables entered in the third model were not significant.

Overall, table one indicates that class and sex are no longer viable indicators of racial progressivity once the “feeling thermometer” variable
“feel close to Blacks” is incorporated into the model. Also, once the “affirmative action” variable is introduced, region of residence loses significance. What this means is that these characteristics are no longer important to the measurement of racial progressivity once the theoretical concepts of the “contact hypothesis” and “counter-narratives” are introduced. If whites resist the social distancing work described by racial formation theory and instead develop deep emotional ties to people of color, they will begin to incorporate the “counter-narratives” expressed by non-whites into their own ideological paradigms.

As previously mentioned, the following nested model table (table 3), demonstrates the same equations with the two “contact hypothesis” variables demonstrating multicollinearity issues removed from the second and third equations. A discussion of the table follows.
In this table, the blocks progress similarly to the first table, except that in the second and third blocks “opposite race live nearby” and “Blacks in community” are omitted. The first block includes the control variables as derived from the literature review, and includes age, sex, class, political views, and region. These variables explain 18.0% of the variation in approval of a close family member marrying an African-American. The sex and class variables were significant at the .01 level.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B</th>
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<td>-.022***</td>
<td>-.322</td>
<td>-.023***</td>
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<td>Feel Close to Blacks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>( )</td>
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<td>For Affirmative Action</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>.164**</td>
<td>.126</td>
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<td></td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>(.045)</td>
<td>(.045)</td>
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<td>2.055 (.268)</td>
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<tr>
<td>R-square</td>
<td>.180***</td>
<td>.275***</td>
<td>.317***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-Square</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.270</td>
<td>.309</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=sample</td>
<td>1673</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>617</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Numbers in parenthesis are standard errors
* p<.01  ** p<.001  *** p<.0001
Source General Social Survey 2000. Split file: whites only
When controlling for all other variables, women are more likely to approve of a close relative marrying a Black person than men. Regarding class, when controlling for all other variables, as one goes from poor to upper class, one becomes more likely to approve of racial intermarriage. Age, on the other hand, is inversely related to the dependent variable so that the older one is, the less likely they are to approve of racial intermarriage. Again, the age variable indicates that younger people are significantly more likely to approve of racial intermarriage than older whites.

Political views range from extremely conservative to extremely liberal and are directly related to the dependent variable, so that the more liberal one is, the more likely to approve of a close relative marrying a Blacks person. The political views variable was significant at the .001 level (with a standardized beta score of .163). Region was also significant at the 0.001 level. Results indicate that people living outside of the southern states were more likely to approve of interracial marriage, than people living in southern states.
For the next block of the equation, the “feel close to Blacks” variable representing the level of interaction with Black people was included along with the previous variables. This equation explains 27.5% of the variation in opinions regarding interracial marriage, an increase of over 9% from the first equation. Along with age, political views and region, the newly introduced “feel close to Blacks” was significant at the .001 level. As expected, the relationship is and direct: the closer one feels toward Black people, the more likely they are to approve of a close relative marrying a Black person. Three variables from the first block remain significant after introducing “feel close to Blacks”. These three variables are age, political views, and region. All three remain relatively unchanged regarding strength and direction of the relationship.

The final block incorporates the attitudinal variable “affirmative action”, a variable indicating respondents’ views on affirmative action. The equation explains 31.7% of variation in attitudes toward interracial marriage, an increase of over 13% from the first equation, and just under a 4% increase from the second equation. All previously entered variables were included. In this equation, “affirmative action”, “feel close to
Blacks", "political views", "region" and "age" remain significant. The newly entered variable "affirmative action" also demonstrated a direct relationship to the dependent variable. All other variables entered in the third model were not significant.

Similar to table one, table two indicates that class and sex are no longer viable indicators of racial progressivity once the "feeling thermometer" variable "feel close to Blacks" is incorporated into the model. What this means is that these characteristics are no longer important to the measurement of racial progressivity once the theoretical concepts of the "contact hypothesis" and "counter-narratives" are introduced. Again we see at the quantitative level that whites who resist the social distancing work described by racial formation theory, and instead develop deep emotional ties to people of color, will begin to incorporate the "counter-narratives" expressed by non-whites into their own ideological paradigms.

Unlike in table one however; region of residence remains significant throughout the model once the insignificant integrated neighborhood variables are removed (due to their lack of association
with views on racial intermarriage). The importance and relevance of this finding exactly is unclear. Perhaps it is demonstrating that people from the south are more likely to live near Blacks people due to population demographics, so that the integrated neighborhood variables were actually closely related to the region variable.

Presented earlier in the statement of the problem section were the research hypotheses. The research hypotheses are: (1) among whites people that have liberal political views will be more likely to approve of interracial marriage than people with conservative political views and (2) among whites, those with positive attitudes of affirmative action towards Black people will be more racially progressive than those who oppose affirmative action.

The first hypothesis focuses on the influence of the “contact hypothesis”, or level of interracial interaction. The null hypothesis was rejected after reviewing the data, meaning that there is a relationship between level of interracial interaction and opinions about racial intermarriage. The variable “feel close to Blacks”, the indicator representing feelings of closeness to Black people was statistically
significant, meaning that the closer one feels toward Black people, the more likely they are to approve of interracial marriage. This relationship held true when controlling for all other variables. The value of “feelings of closeness” as a measure, rather than the actual level of physical and social integration, indicates that the qualitative notion of cross-racial relationship building is a vital component to the “contact hypothesis”, and may be the deciding factor between whether an individual will exemplify the racial progressivity of the “contact hypothesis” or the alienation and animosity described by “racial threat theory”.

The second null hypothesis is also rejected and the research hypothesis is retained. This is because whites with positive attitudes regarding affirmative action did prove to be more racially progressive than other whites, even when controlling for all other variables. This indicates that approval of affirmative action and approval of interracial marriage are related and perhaps the key finding is that they are related even when controlling for factors like political views and region of residence.
Discussion

Overall, the data suggests that racial progressivity among whites can be measured and that in the face of continued inequality and racial disadvantage in the United States, many whites refuse to see race as a structuring principle and instead demonstrate an ideology of "colorblind racism". However, among whites, there is a progressive group who not only see race as valid and important but who are likely to reject the dominant notions of race. This group are people who identify as white, but who are less likely to perform the racial hierarchy boundary work exemplified by social distancing (and therefore more likely to report feeling close to Black people) and who have developed counter-narratives as a result of their emotional connectedness to Blacks (as is evidenced by their support of racially progressive social policies like Affirmative Action). Once these concepts were entered into the model, demographic variables like class and sex lost significance, indicating that regardless of these characteristics, the development of meaningful relationships and social solidarity with people of color are influential in the development of racially progressive attitudes. Liberal political views
and age remained significant throughout the model indicating the historic legacy of racist ideals (in that older people who lived prior to the civil rights movement are more likely to maintain a racist ideology some fifty years later).

Using the interracial marriage model has a long history in measuring racial progress in the United States. By using it as a proxy for racial attitudes, I recognize this legacy of past sociologists in general and Black sociologists in particular. What this research adds to that legacy, is the relationship between support for affirmative action policy and racial intermarriage in the so-called "post-racial" era: people who are conservative, male, white and against Affirmative Action continue to hold negative attitudes toward Black-white interracial marriage even as a doctrine of color-blindness is extolled by them through media outlets, the Republican party and other social venues and institutions. This research serves to remind us that race matters even as its discussion recedes from public debate and forum in the political arena.

By removing the two integrated neighborhood variables due their insignificance (insignificant variables imply that there is no association
with the dependent variable, and make estimating the model more difficult), the final R-squared for the model indicates that over thirty-one percent of variation in views on interracial marriage is accounted for using the variables provided in the model. While this is a substantial percentage, it is possible that future researchers can improve our understanding of the variables and indicators of racial progressivity by incorporating other variables found in the research, or by utilizing a different dataset.

At first, the General Social Survey seemed like the appropriate secondary data set to use for this research due to its rigorous sampling process, and the plethora of data available given the consistency with which the survey has been administered over the past few decades. However, because certain survey questions were used in only some of the years, use of the entire cumulative GSS file was impossible: there were not enough cases to generate statistical analysis, because not all survey questions were asked to all survey respondents over the years. Although this type of analysis is not impossible, it does require pooling data, adjusting for sampling weights, and other such complex statistical
applications that would be beyond the scope of this research. Rather, careful review of the available data was performed for each year with the intention of selecting one wave-year to be used for analysis. It was determined that the 2000 wave of the GSS provided the most useful set of variables for this research because of its special module that allowed for a fuller examination of racial attitudes and implicit stereotyping. Unfortunately, despite the special racial attitudes module, using only one year limited my ability to directly apply theoretical concepts to survey indicators.

Another limitation to using only the 2000 wave of the GSS was the inability to include the concept of “shared oppression” presented in the literature review as documented by social researchers like Ruth Frankenberg (1993). Conceptually, the notion that whites who have experienced or understand the notion of social oppression would be more sympathetic to the social oppression experienced by Blacks is very sound, especially in the case of white members of the LGBTQ community, whites with disabilities, and whites who have experienced religious oppression. Unfortunately, there simply were not proper indicators of
this concept available in the 2000 GSS. Future quantitative research would benefit from exploring this theory further because the relationship has yet to be proven using a nationally representative sample.

Frankenberg (1993) also indicated that interracial relationships formed early in childhood are also important to the formation of racially progressive attitudes among whites, but again, indicators that suggest the formation of bonds with African-Americans during childhood were not available in the 2000 wave of the GSS. Perhaps variables indicating the race of childhood caretakers, friends and mentors would help to accurately capture this.

My suggestion for future researchers would be to create a new dataset that includes items that directly address the concepts of "shared oppression", "childhood relationships", and multiple indicators pertaining to racially progressive attitudes.

Conclusion

It was important for me to put myself in the research as a Black man studying whites. I received a lot of questions from colleagues and faculty as to why I wanted to study whites and racial progressivity. I
thought it was obvious, but apparently it was intriguing to many people, so I ended up performing much inward-reflection as to why this is important to me. My conclusion on this matter is that in order for the world to continue moving toward racial equality (and away from color-blind racism); it is going to take the dominant group (whites) to do most of the progressing. Colorblind racism is a social rut that is difficult for whites to get out of. If you never see the racism and you don’t think that it’s there, than you will never see the need to change. If colorblind racism posits that we are all equal now and that any disparity among the races is due to individual will (or lack thereof), then the discriminating social obstacles in place for people of color are rendered invisible to color-blind racists through “tokenism” (that one successful Black guy). Buying in to colorblind racism makes it so that whites never have to challenge their notions of race, or the instances of racism they may contribute. Since they are the power holders economically, politically, and socially, and they are unable to question their own racial views and the racial inequities in society, then how can we (Black people) ever move forward? While these thoughts could lead some researchers to
conclude that my opinion reflects a sense of futility when it comes to social racial progressivity propelled by people of color, I argue the contrary. By highlighting the realities of a colorblind racist ideology, Black people can potentially influence whites to see beyond the veil of colorblindness, and toward a paradigm of equality regardless of color.
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